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[“YOU HAVE MADE ME VERY HAPPY, SWEETHEART!” SAYS HUGH, STOOPING AND KISSING CECIL.]

THE SOUND OF A LAUGH.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

“Then you don’t go home to-night at all?”

“No, I can’t. This case comes on to-morrow, and it will take me all my time to work up my notes.”

The speakers—two young men—are seated at a little marble-topped table in a busy city café. The time is six o’clock on a chill November evening, and the attractive café is thronged with customers, each small partitioned-off space holding its one or two occupants.

“Then Mrs. Dare doesn’t mind being left?” goes on the first speaker, a tall young fellow of some twenty-five years, with deep grey eyes, fair curling hair, and a handsome clear-cut face.

His companion, who boasts a few more years, has a grave, kindly face lit up by keen brown eyes; his wavy dark hair falls loosely on a broad intellectual forehead. He is not exactly handsome, but his powerful face is full of character.

“Oh, no,” he says, quietly. “She isn’t a bit nervous, although the girls are away from home.”

His friend looks up quickly.

“Where are they?” he asks, in deeply interested tones.

“Staying with Mrs. Fotheringham at Sorbiton. They’ll be back next week.”

His companion flushes and changes the subject.

“Has Nora discharged that satanic-looking maid yet?” he asks, stirring his coffee dilligently.

“Oh, yes, she went a week ago. If she had not, I believe Nora would have been afraid to be left; but it is only for one night, you see, and we have the telephone.”

“The telephone!”

It is the older man’s turn to grow red now, but he answers very calmly.

“Didn’t you know?” he says, coolly. “I thought Cecil would have told you.”

“Cecil tells me nothing,” growls out grey eyes.

“Well,” goes on his friend, smiling, “some little time ago Nora betrayed to me that she felt a wee bit lonely with me down at my chambers all day. Bothering over this an idea struck me. I had a telephone fixed up between the terrace and my rooms, and now we can have a talk whenever we like.”

“By Jove! a capital idea. Whereabouts is it fixed?”

“In the little boudoir that Nora is so fond of. We shall have a chat to-night before she goes to bed.”

“Well, that’s awfully jolly. I say, Dare, hadn’t we better be off?”

The young barrister looks at his watch, and is horrified to see how the time has run away.

“By Jove! yes,” he cries.

“Where are you bound for, old boy?”

“The theatre, to see ‘Miss Decima.’”

Dare laughs.

“For the hundredth time?” he says, slyly.

"No, not quite. Look here, I'll walk with you to your chambers."

"All right, come on then."

They rise from the table, and at the same instant a dark-faced man, who had been drinking coffee on the other side of the partition, jumps up and hurries down the café before them.

The two young men, coming out immediately after him, walk briskly away down the Strand, and he, watching them covertly, drops to the rear, and slouches along close behind them.

Reaching Dare's chambers they come to a standstill, the man sinking into the shade of a doorway, and listening to their parting words.

"You'll be up at the Terrace soon?" says Dare.

"Oh, yes. By-the-by, how's my godson?" "Flourishing finely. Everyone seems to think him a jolly little chap. Even Cecil, who as a rule detests babies, adores him."

"Humph!" growls grey eyes, "wish I were the boy."

"Oh, no, you don't, Raincliffe," retorts his friend, briskly. "You wouldn't change places with anyone."

"By Jove, I would! If I were a poor man I believe she'd adore me; as it is, she treats me shamefully, just because I am the unlucky possessor of ten thousand a year."

Dare laughs unfeelingly as he shakes hands with the injured young man.

"Go to," he cries, "in time you'll conquer."

"Don't think so," mutters Raincliffe. Dare stands and watches him with kindly eyes as he strides away.

"Cecil's too hard," he murmurs, as he reaches his rooms, and turns up the gas. "Never mind, I must get Nora to persuade her into treating him more kindly."

Drawing his chair up to a great table littered with papers, he sets to work in earnest; first, however, removing the stopper from the mouth of his telephone, and pushing table and chair close to it.

Stephen Dare, though only thirty, is well known as a rising young barrister. Some little time ago he had married a Miss Power, a beautiful girl who had been his father's ward and educated with his two sisters.

A year after the marriage old Dare died suddenly, and Stephen and his sisters were left orphans, for Mrs. Dare had died when Kitty was born.

The girls, although very comfortably provided for, were yet very forlorn, and Stephen's sweet young wife, guessing this, had insisted that they should come and live at the Terrace.

The girls were in raptures at the scheme, for they worshipped Nora, and considered living with her as the best thing to be desired. And a happy family they were, needing only one thing—as Cecil slyly remarked—to make them perfectly content.

In time, too, that need was supplied. Nora became the proud possessor of a lovely boy, who, of course, filled the house, and before whom everyone fell down and worshipped.

Hugh Raincliffe—Dare's companion at the café—is an old school friend of the barrister's. He and a younger brother had been left some years before quite alone in the world.

Hugh had succeeded to a large fortune at his father's death, and, leaving the boy Humphrey at college, he had started off on a tour round the world.

His absence had been a long one, but at last he had ceased his wanderings, and, installing himself in his great London house, had made up his mind to settle down and look after Humphrey, now a medical student.

"The lad wants a companion," he decided. "I shall stay at home with him now," which announcement had greatly amused Master Humphrey and his especial ohum, Kitty Dare.

"The dear old boy is really thinking of Cecil," the lad tells Kitty, confidentially.

"She was looking after far more than his good little brother."

And Kitty, a delicate slender girl of sixteen, nods sagaciously, for she quite agrees with him in this matter.

Stephen Dare works away with a will that evening, eager to be well prepared when the business of the day begins. Labouring manfully, he has finished all by four o'clock, and throws himself back in his chair for an hour's sleep, knowing that if he gets no rest he will be good for nothing during the day.

In five minutes he is sleeping soundly—sleeping and dreaming of Nora and the boy. All at once into the sweet dream comes the faint sound of a whistle—the telephone signal—and so vivid is the impression that it awakens him.

He starts to his feet to see that the clock fingers are pointing to half-past five, and that his fire is nearly out.

"Been asleep over an hour," he murmurs. "What a startling dream that was! The telephone must have got on my mind."

Laughing lazily he walks over to it, lifting the tube mechanically to his ear, and even as he does so there comes another faint whistle.

"Ah!" he mutters, smiling, "no dream after all. Nora is awake and wants to talk to me."

He lifts the tube again, but as he listens the colour leaves his face, and an awful expression of horror creeps into his eyes. Two words come to him. "Help! help!" Then a faint scream, and after that all is silent.

"My Heaven!" shouts the frenzied man, "what dreadful thing is happening? My darling, I am coming!"

He rushes from the room, across the landing, and down the first flight of stairs. Reaching the second he commences to descend; but the shock has been too much for him, his head seems suddenly to whirl round, he loses his balance, falls heavily down the last few stairs, and lies at the foot of them still and lifeless, the faint glimmer of light that steals in at the great landing window, resting coldly on his ghastly face and helpless figure. At last he moves, opening his eyes and looking around him curiously.

"Why am I here?" he wonders, lazily. "Let me see," meditatively, as with difficulty he rises to his feet. "Ah, I remember! I was in my rooms working and I went to sleep. Then I had a horrid dream—thought some awful cry came through the telephone. But why am I here?" he ponders again; then suddenly remembered that it was no dream. "Ah! how I have wasted the precious time!" he cries, bitterly, staggering to the door, and opening it.

He rushes out and hails a hansom that, as luck would have it, is passing at that minute. The driver draws up his conveyance very slowly beside the kerbstone, and casts a very dubious look at the distracted barrister.

"Oh, hurry, man!" exclaims Dare, in such wild accents that he attracts the attention of two policemen, who hasten up and turn their lanterns full upon the haggard face and roughened hair of the frantic man.

"Drunk," remarks one of the intelligent officers.

"So I thort," responds cabby, eagerly. "Come, young man, goes on the policeman, laying his hand on Dare's arm, 'you've got to follow us quietly.'"

Dare shakes off the hand savagely. "I'm not drunk," he cries, fiercely. "I've had a bad fall."

The men look sceptical, and Dare, divining their unbelief, continues his tale collectedly and quietly.

"I am a barrister, and have been working all night in my chambers here. I hailed this hansom because I am in a hurry to reach my own home in Northbourne-terrace, where I am terribly afraid something awful has happened."

His voice trembles as he utters those last

words, and he takes a hasty step towards the hansom.

"We can't let you go till you explain, sir," says one of the officers. "What d'you mean by 'something awful'?"

In a few hurried words Dare tells them all, and though they still look incredulous, they put no further obstacle in his way.

"Cannot one of you men come with me?" he asks, as he springs into the hansom; "in any case you shall be liberally rewarded."

"You can go, Baxter," says the senior officer. "If there is anything wrong, mind and report at once."

Dare shudders at the ominous words, but is silent, for he is longing to be off. They rattle away westward, Dare lying back in his place and staring straight before him, his mind filled with a maze of doubts and fears. They are not long on the road, for the driver whips up his jadeal steed and soon turns into the quiet well-to-do street in which Dare's house is situated.

As the hansom pulls up, the young man springs out and glances up quickly at his home. All is as usual, blinds drawn close, door tightly shut. Handing the driver a liberal fee, he bids him wait a few minutes.

"Come," he says then to the policeman, "I have my latchkey. If all is right, the door will be locked and I shall have to ring them up; if not"—he does not finish the sentence, but hurries up the steps, and, fitting his key, turns it in the lock. There is no resistance, the door yields, and they stand inside the hall.

"Hark, sir," cries the officer, "there's someone singing?"

Dare listens and gives a relieved laugh. "It's my wife's voice!" he exclaims, and rushes upstairs.

"It's a regular sell!" mutters the policeman, scornfully, staring after the flying figure. "Howsoever, she'll pay well for my trouble."

Hardly has he arrived at this decision when an awful groan falls upon his ear, telling him at once that a tragedy is near at hand. He rushes upstairs straight into Mrs. Dare's little boudoir to behold a sight that confuses his cool head.

Dare stands staring at his young wife, who is walking up and down the room, carrying her baby boy and crooning over him a low sweet lullaby. She is clad in a flowing, pale-blue dressing-gown; her long golden hair streams behind her; in her lovely eyes there is a wild, fixed stare. On the floor lies the body of a woman—the baby's devoted nurse.

The officer, going over to her, finds that she is quite dead. Drawers and dressing-cases are scattered around her, overturned and empty. It has been a deed of violence and robbery, and the vile murderer has evidently escaped. As he rises from beside the nurse, Baxter sees the girl glide to her grief-stricken husband, and hold out the little quiet baby form to him.

"See!" she cries, with a vacant smile. "My baby! Stephen's baby! dead, quite dead!"

"Oh, no, darling!" says the young man, throwing his arms round her and his boy, "not dead, surely! Look, sweet one! Here is Stephen!"

She smiles again. "Yes, he is dead; that man," with a fearful shudder, "took him from me, and twisted a handkerchief round his pretty, soft neck. See!"

She totters as she holds out the baby, and Dare, catching the child in his arms, sees that her wild words are true, sees that the sweet baby face is drawn and livid, the little limbs stiff and cold. And the poor young mother looks on smilingly, for the terrible events of the night have shattered her mind in a very tragic manner. Stephen, almost mad himself, turns in a very frenzy to his shocked companion.

"Bring help!" he shouts, "the dastardly villain must be tracked and secured!"

The man takes a step towards the door. "Shall you mind being left, sir?" he asks, casting a look at the silent figure on the floor. "No! no!" impatiently, "go at once. And look you, drive to this address, and beg Mr. Raincliffe to come to me quickly."

In a minute the man is gone, leaving the poor young husband to watch over his darling, who has slipped down on to the floor, and is once more singing a cradle song over the dead baby in her lap.

The next few days are as a fevered dream to Dare. Hugh Raincliffe comes to him at once, and staying at the house, gives himself up entirely to his friend's service. After that awful night Nora has relapsed into an almost unconscious state, and is happily oblivious to all that is going on around her.

The girls, terribly shocked and upset, are at home once more, watching over their brother with wistful tenderness. And all this time the police can find no clue to the murderer's whereabouts—he seems to have miraculously disappeared, carrying with him a large sum of money, and all Nora's beautiful jewels. The old cook, who was found to be absent from the house at the time of the murder, returns next day, and is nearly heartbroken when she hears the terrible news.

"Why did I ever leave the missus!" she wails out. "You see when that there telegram come, calling me to my sister's dying bed, the dear young lady insisted on me going at once!"

So the time goes on, and still the crime remains a mystery which no one can solve. When Nora opens her eyes again, the vacant expression still reigns in them, her mind seems completely unaltered.

"Will she never be better, doctor?" cries Stephen, in despairing accents, and the doctor looks very grave.

"Some great shock might do it," he says, slowly, "but there is little hope, I am sorry to say. Give up this horrible house and take her and your sisters abroad; the change may benefit her, and it will certainly do you all good."

Stephen, eager to follow the kind old man's advice, gives up his house at once. Hugh Raincliffe is a very valuable assistant to him in all these final arrangements, managing everything for the comfort of the travellers, and in the end sees them off by one of the Mediterranean boats.

"In a year's time we shall be back, old fellow," says Stephen, as he stands with Nora's little cold hand clasped closely in his.

"All right!" cries Hugh, feeling somewhat choky. "I'll have a house prepared for you, and be only too glad to welcome you to it."

Stephen smiles wearily, then turns to guide Nora's lagging footsteps down the cabin stairs. Hugh glances at the two girls, who are gazing hopelessly after the young couple. Kitty shading her dim eyes with her hand, Cecil with a very troubled expression on her bright, bronette face.

"Good-bye," says Hugh, hastily, as the signal "All ashore!" is given. "Cheer them up as much as you can, girls."

"Yes, yes!" says Cecil, holding out her hand, "we will do our best, Hugh."

"May I come and see you soon?" he asks, slowly.

"If you like," she says, graciously. "You have been very good to us, dear!"

That last kind word proves too much for Hugh's composure. Snapping, he presses his lips to hers, then drops down into the tender, and is carried away.

"Well, really!" gasps Cecil, flushing hotly.

"You shouldn't have called him, dear, if you didn't want him to kiss you," remarks Kitty, wisely, smiling faintly, as she looks at her sister's flushing face.

CHAPTER II.

It is Christmas time, and the Dares are back in London, settled in a cosy, luxurious house in a stately terrace off the Baywater

Road. The change had done them all a world of good, bringing back a tinge of colour to poor Nora's ethereal face, and a quieter expression to the sweet blue eyes. Stephen is glad to get his darling back to a home of their own once more; he has had a beautiful suite of rooms prepared for her, and he comforts himself with the thought that there he can keep her well away from the world's curious gaze. Still she is to be amongst them as much as possible.

"Cheerful society and merry faces are the best tonics for her," says the old doctor. "Give her plenty of 'em."

The girls are looking almost bright again, for time has lessened their sorrow a little, and Stephen is glad to see the happy light come back to their eyes, and the merry tone creep into the girlish voices once again.

One evening, a night or two before Christmas, Kitty Dare comes slowly into the luxuriously furnished drawing-room and, walking over to the fireplace, throws herself into a low chair and gazes pensively into the leaping flames. It has been one of poor Nora's worst days, and the girls have found it very hard to soothe the afflicted young creature. But as the day dies she grows quieter, the weary eyes close, and the girls, watching her, grow less anxious.

"Go down to tea, child," whispers Cecil to Kitty. "I will come presently. Go, dear, you are looking pale."

So Kitty creeps down to the cheery drawing-room, and indulges in a dreamy reverie while awaiting Cecil's advent. Presently her meditative mood is put to flight by a ring at the door bell—a ring that is evidently pleasing to her, for she sits erect and looks with brightening eyes towards the door.

"Any admittance?" asks Hugh Raincliffe, a minute later.

"Of course!" Kitty cries gladly. "Ah, Humphrey!" as the younger brother—a merry-faced, slighter edition of Hugh—appears; "you too! Mercy, boy! how red your nose is!"

Humphrey, at this frank speech shuts one eye and endeavours to catch sight of the offending feature.

"You're envious, child!" he cries, after a short inspection—"it isn't one atom red; I've seen yours far worse, Miss Dare."

"That's a fib," retorts Kitty, "my nose is never red. And see here!" she adds hurriedly, "I'm not Miss Dare."

"Eh, what? married?" cries the lad, tragically, flying at her, and pulling her round in front of him.

"Don't be idiotic!" snaps out Kitty with a frown. "Am I likely to marry?"

"You'll be mad if you don't," retorts the boy, wickedly. "But tell us what you mean?" giving her a little shake.

"I mean that a week ago—just after you went away, Hugh—Uncle Pomeroy died and left all his money to Stephen, only stipulating that he should take the name of Pomeroy. Stephen agreed to the condition, and has decided that, to avoid confusion, we too shall be called by the new name."

"It's splendid news!" says Hugh, heartily. "Stephen will now be able to devote himself entirely to poor Nora. How is she to-day, Kitty?"

"Not so well," gravely. "Cecil is with her now, but she is coming down soon."

"You see we never managed to find that maid of Nora's," says Hugh abruptly, after a pause. "She might have been able to clear up the mystery."

"Yes," says Kitty slowly, then shivers slightly. "I can't bear to talk of it," she adds in low tones. "Poor Stephen frightens me sometimes with his thirst for revenge."

"It will come in time," says Humphrey in grave tones. "Let's change the subject, dear—who are these people who dine here to-night?"

Instead of smiling as he had expected, Kitty looks even more serious.

"They live in Inverness Terrace," she says

slowly. "A brother and sister. He is something in the City. Three days ago Stephen was nearly run over in Piccadilly—this gentleman was passing, and, seeing his peril, pulled him back at the risk of his own life. Stephen felt very grateful, and he has made Cecil call on the sister and ask them to dinner."

"Well?" says Hugh, quietly. "You don't look pleased."

Kitty flushes up.

"Cecil went," she says, dubiously, "and saw the sister."

"And was not charmed?"

"No; she says there is something false about her."

"Cecil's too fastidious," breaks in Humphrey, bluntly. "I say, Kitty, she doesn't seem to be coming; shall we have tea?"

"Certainly not!" exclaims his brother. "She'll be here in a minute."

"What a greedy creature you are, Humphrey!" remarks Kitty, severely.

"Am I?" laughs the lad. "I wonder how many of those cakes you ate before we came."

"Not one!" indignantly. "Are you ever anything but hungry?"

"Never!" he replies, coolly. "I work so hard, you know. Why, I've been at a lovely post-mortem all this morning."

Kitty gives a little disgusted shriek.

"Don't, you wretch!" she commands.

"Hugh! give him some tea."

"When Cecil comes," replies the young man, coolly.

At that Kitty veers round.

"How can you be so hard?" she cries.

"The poor boy is starving!"

"Yes, starving!" groans Humphrey in hollow accents. "He will kill me, Kitty! And see what he is guarding for Cecil!—the first brew of tea, and her favourite cakes!"

Kitty laughs scornfully. "He wouldn't be quite so kind if he knew of her last freak."

"What's that?" asks Hugh, lazily.

"She never intends to marry."

"That's old news!" he says, disdainfully, with a shrug of his broad shoulders.

"Oh, wait! That's not all," hastily.

"You know Doris Morell?"—He nods.

"She's Cecil's greatest friend. Lately she has become a hospital nurse, and Cecil has taken up the idea, too; goes to the Children's Hospital nearly every morning to help, and vows she'll follow Doris's example."

"The deuce she will!" ejaculated the young man, looking so dismayed that his tormentor feels quite touched.

"Oh, what language!" cries a sweet, defiant voice behind them, and Cecil comes in, looking very pretty in her maize silk evening gown. "It's no use looking so fierce, Hugh," she goes on calmly; "I shall do just what I please."

"You must not!" cries Hugh, impetuously, standing tall and straight before his idol.

"You are not suited for the life."

Before she can retort, Humphrey laughs and joins in.

"There are two or three good-looking fellows amongst the doctors at that hospital," he says, reflectively, as he takes his tea from Kitty. "Seen 'em, Cecil?"

The girl, resenting Hugh's imperious attitude, answers very sweetly,—

"Oh, yes! they are very nice! Dr. Vane especially."

"Pshaw!" exclaims Hugh, angrily, "I shall appeal to Stephen to prevent you."

"Do!" she retorts, passionately. "I wonder when you'll learn not to meddle in my affairs, Mr. Raincliffe."

"Never!" he says, doggedly, and after that there is a silence—that Kitty breaks presently by asking after Nora.

"She is asleep," says Cecil, softly.

"Ah, here comes Stephen!" suddenly cries Hugh, springing up with a sigh of relief, and going to meet his grave-faced friend. "Listen to this, old chap!" he cries, impetuously, and,

to Cecil's great annoyance, speaks at once of her scheme.

Dare—or Pomeroy, as we must now call him—goes over to the girl and takes her hand in his.

"Is your heart quite set on it, dear?" he asks, gently.

"Yes, Stephen," she says, softly but firmly. Her brother looks a little troubled, yet he answers very gently,—

"We will talk it over some other time," he says, quietly. "How is Nora, dear child?"

"She has been very restless, but she is sleeping now."

"Ah, then I must not rouse her. I'll go and have a smoke before I dress. Kitty, my child! if you don't mind, you won't be ready when our guests arrive."

"You had a narrow escape, old man," puts in Hugh, ransacking himself.

"Yes, I am deeply in this Mr. Waring's debt," says Stephen dreamily. "Did the girls tell you of the money?"

"Yes, indeed! I congratulate you."

"Aye, I shall have time and means now to track that monster down!" says Stephen, a fierce light in his dark eyes. "Come, Kitty, you'll never go if I don't take you."

The girl, laughing, moves away with him, and Humphrey, unwilling to play the part of daisy picker, hurries after them.

"I'd like a smoke too," he murmurs hastily, and follows them out, thus leaving Hugh and Cecil alone.

The young man stands by the fire, looking gloomily down into it. Cecil, furtively surveying him from the shelter of her fan, loses patience at last and breaks the silence, anxious to hear what he will say.

"How entertaining you are!" she cries, peevishly. Starting at the sound of her voice, he turns his eyes on her sweet provoking face.

"Is your decision final?" he asks, stiffly.

"I think so," comes the slow answer.

"You are a heartless fiend!" he cries, striding over to her and seizing her hand. "Ah, how can I love you so!"

He flings her hand away after these terrible words, and going back to the mantelpiece, leans his forehead upon it. Presently a soft hand is laid on his arm, while a meek voice murmurs,—

"I—I am no worse than you. I—I heard that you flirted disgracefully at the Brereton's dance with that Miss Trevelyan."

He raises his head, and looks at her in amazement.

"What! that big girl with the red hair?" he cries. "She's a fright!" with deep scorn, and staring calmly at his lady-love. "I—I believe you were jealous!" rapturously.

"No, no!" falters the girl, retreating as he advances.

"Come, confess!" he commands, slipping an arm round her waist.

"Well, I was," she answers, with an adorable glance.

"Darling!" he murmurs, and is stooping to kiss her when a footman, opening the door suddenly, announces—

"Miss and Mr. Waring!" and, followed by Stephen and the younger one, the guests enter the room and advance to meet their blushing hostess.

In her confusion she greets them with great warmth, while Hugh stands bravely beside her, glaring severely at Humphrey and Kitty, who are looking distinctly amused.

Hugh, in his turn, is introduced to the new comers, and sees that the gentleman is of medium height, with fierce black eyes, forming a startling contrast to his intensely pallid skin.

For the rest he is well dressed and prosperous-looking, and talks easily and lightly to all.

His sister—a tall, showy-looking girl—has her brother's piercing eyes and dusky hair; but the pallor of her skin is softened by a very pretty tinge of colour in her cheeks.

She talks a great deal—rather in the gush-

ing style—and is a startling contrast to her dignified young hostess.

"Nora is awake," whispers Stephen to Cecil as dinner is announced, and he prepares to lead the way with Miss Waring, "she will be in the drawing-room after dinner."

Cecil nods, and turns to listen, a little disdainfully, to Mr. Waring's rather florid compliments.

Dinner, that evening, is a wearisome affair to her. She is delighted when at last she can make her escape, and, followed by the other girls, retire to the drawing-room.

That pretty room looks very bright and attractive as they enter it.

Cecil, with a little glad cry, steps forward and kneels down by a lovely golden-haired girl who is sitting by the fire gazing listlessly before her.

"My sister-in-law, Mrs. Pomeroy, Miss Waring!" says Cecil stiffly, catching sight of her guest's amazed face.

Nora never looks up, and Kitty, seeing Miss Waring's astonishment, draws her aside, and hurriedly explains matters.

"I—I didn't know there was a Mrs. Pomeroy," stammers the guest. "How awfully ill she looks."

Kitty looks distressed.

"That white gown makes her look pale," she says, hurriedly. "Ah, there are the gentlemen coming! See! she hears Mr. Raincliffe's voice! she is very fond of him!"

Glaucous up curiously, Miss Waring sees that the poor invalid has risen from her seat, and, with a happy smile, is hastening across the room as the door opens and the gentlemen enter.

Hugh, who is first, greets poor Nora with a very tender smile.

"Well, my sweet one!" he says, smoothing her bright hair with a gentle hand, "are you glad to see Hugh again?"

"Oh, yes, dear!" she says, with a faint, sweet laugh. "I want you to tell me something that I can't remember," pressing her forehead confusedly, and looking imploringly at him.

"Have you asked Stephen?" says Hugh, drawing her down on to a low couch.

She sighs heavily.

"Hush! no," she says, mysteriously. "Did you not know? Poor fellow! he cannot help me, he has no memory."

Since her illness her mind has been possessed by that one idea—the belief that her husband's intellect is shattered. Those around only smile at her cautious words, and Stephen falls on his knees beside her, and strokes her thin, white hand.

"Where is my brother, Mr. Pomeroy?" asks Julia Waring, looking down on the little group round Nora, with a slight frown, for she has been disappointed to-night, and feels almost ill-tempered. Stephen does not hear the question, and biting her full lip she turns with a polite smile to Humphrey Raincliffe, who volunteers the information that a note had come for Mr. Waring, and he had gone to the library to answer it.

"A note!" echoes the girl, growing for an instant deadly pale, then suddenly recovering, and laughing affectedly. "My brother is a terribly busy man, Mr. Humphrey. Ah, here he comes at last!" As she speaks, Waring enters, and coming to them first, pauses for a moment.

"I've sent my answer," he says, gaily. "The note I received, Julia, contained the good news that business was never better."

He lays a slight stress on the last words, and Miss Waring, listening eagerly, looks up with a relieved face.

"I'm glad of that," says Humphrey, politely, "business must be an awful nuisance! But come and speak to Mrs. Pomeroy, she'll be leaving us soon."

He springs up, and, linking his arm in the elder man's, turns him straight round.

"With pleasure," says Waring, politely.

He has heard briefly from Hugh Raincliffe of the young wife's invalid condition, and is

rather curious to see her; but as his eyes fall on Nora's smiling, unconscious face, an awful change comes over his own, his eyes seem starting from his head, and a dull tinge steals into his pallid cheeks.

"John, are you ill?" cries his sister, sharply, noting the alarm on every face.

Nora alone seems unconcerned. She stares straight at the man's livid face, and nods at him with a happy smile.

His sister's shrill voice seems to startle him into self-possession, the blue tinge leaves his face, and with a mighty effort he speaks.

"Forgive me for frightening you, my dear Miss Pomeroy," he murmurs, drawing out a fine white handkerchief, and hastily wiping the beads of perspiration from his forehead. "It is my stupid heart; the doctor has warned me to take care of myself."

"Indeed, I am very sorry," murmurs Cecil.

"Ah, yes!" sighs his sister, to sympathising Kitty. "John is so reckless. He ran to catch a train to-day, and this attack is the consequence."

She is glad to see that the girl believes her; but she flashes an uneasy puzzled look at her brother, as he stands talking easily and gracefully to those around.

"What's put him out?" she wonders as, at Cecil's invitation, she goes over to the piano. "There's some mystery connected with that insipid looking golden haired girl."

As she strikes a few firm chords Nora rises, and taking Cecil's hand moves towards the door.

"Good-night," she says, pensively, with a wandering glance round. "Hugh, will you take me and Cecil upstairs?"

He hastens after them, and the trio slip out of the room and wend their way slowly up the wide, shallow stairs.

At the entrance to the invalid's suite of rooms her attendant, a pleasant-faced, bright-eyed woman, stands waiting, and to her Nora goes willingly with the air of a tired child.

"My lamb!" the woman murmurs, "how weary she looks!"

"Good night," cries the girl, fixing her great wistful blue eyes on Cecil and Hugh. "Ah! how happy you look. Kiss me, Hugh."

Then, as he does so, her thoughts take another turn. "Kiss Cecil," she pleads, and watches pensively as, without the slightest hesitation, he complies with her request. "Oh, that's right!" says Nora, gleefully, waving them away. "Pray for me, Hugh; pray that I may remember!"

Her hand goes to her forehead, a troubled look fills the sweet eyes; with a heavy sigh she takes her nurse's hand and disappears into her room.

"Poor little soul!" says Hugh, as they retrace their steps, "how fragile she looks! 'Pray that I may remember,' she said. I think rather that we should pray that she may always forget."

"If she could remember, her reason might be restored," says Cecil, musingly.

"But there is a chance that the shock might kill her," retorts Hugh, quickly.

"Nonsense!" cries the girl, bravely, throwing off the gloom that is stealing over her bright spirit, "away with your creaking!"

She runs lightly downstairs, pausing in the hall to throw a wistful glance towards him.

"Why did you kiss me, sir?" she asks, severely.

"Nora told me to do so," he answers, meekly.

"And to please her you made the effort, eh?" she queries, coquettishly.

"Oh, I didn't mind," he says, kindly. "I rather liked it."

"More than I did!" she cries, with a faint grimace; then seeing a fell purpose in his eye, she flies across the hall and into the drawing-room. Hugh following her closely.

Miss Waring, who possesses a powerful though harsh soprano voice, is just concluding a florid French chanson as the young couple enter the room. She sees them at once,

and, jumping up, gushingly implores Miss Pomeroy to take her place at the piano.

Cecil, glancing quickly round the room, casts a reproachful look at Kitty and Humphrey, who, during the young lady's performance, have been lounging on a distant sofa. Stephen has been politely turning the leaves for the fair songstress, while Mr. Waring is lounging by the fire, gazing meditatively at the glowing coals.

"I'm ashamed of those two," whispers Cecil to Hugh, with a wrathful glance at Kitty. "Yes, Miss Waring," she goes on sweetly, "I will sing with pleasure, if you really wish it."

She passes over to the piano, casting an amused look at Hugh, who has been promptly captured by Miss Julia. Cecil gives them "The Clang of the Wooden Shoon," and so sweet and pathetic is her young fresh voice that tears start unbidden into Miss Waring's hard eyes, and, as the song comes to an end, she looks up eagerly and begs for just one more before they go.

Cecil, touched by the tears in the piercing eyes, graciously complies, giving them "Léonore," a quaint, melodious song, that is received by all but Mr. Waring with flattering enthusiasm.

"Rather too sentimental for me, Miss Pomeroy," he says, bluntly.

"I'm sorry," laughs the girl, rising from the piano.

"Nay, my dear young lady," with heavy gallantry, "'twas beautifully sung. Now, Julia, 'tis time we were off."

"Don't hurry," cries Stephen, hospitably, though he is longing to be with Nora, "'tis early yet."

But his new friend is firm.

"I feel a little shaky yet," he says, apologetically.

So they take their departure, leaving the Pomeroy and the Raincliffes gazing at each other somewhat doubtfully.

"A strange couple," remarks Stephen, dreamily.

"Disagreeable, I think," says Cecil, pausing at the door on her way up to Nora.

"He saved my life," says her brother, gently. "Yes, I shall always be grateful to him for that; but I shall never like the girl."

With this determined assertion Miss Pomeroy sails away. Hugh goes off with Stephen for a cigar and for a few minutes Kitty and Humphrey are left alone.

"Do you like them, Humphrey?" she asks, slowly, thrusting the bright brass poker into the glowing fire.

"No," says the lad, bluntly, and then is silent.

"Why don't you like them?" demands Kitty, anxiously.

"I don't like her because she's vulgar. I don't like him because he's a mystery."

"What do you mean?" cries the girl, her eyes sparkling.

"Nothing. I'll just ask you one question—Why did he nearly have a fit when he first saw Nora?"

"You silly boy," impatiently, "that was his heart."

"Rubbish!" he ejaculates with more force than elegance. "I heard him whisper, 'Good Heaven's! that face!' just as his eyes fell on the poor dear, and then he went green."

Kitty looks bewildered.

"Tell me at once what you mean!" she says, crossly.

"Not I. I'll wait until I am sure."

"Oh, Humphrey," she cries, reproachfully, "I may know more in a few days, that's all I can say. There's Hugh calling; I'm off," and he vanishes, leaving her a prey to curiosity, her mind disturbed by many a strange uncanny thought.

Mr. Waring and his sister traverse the short distance to their own home in utter silence. Mounting the steps the man gives three sharp

knocks, and the door almost immediately opening, discloses a tall, very ugly, wrinkled old woman, who peeps cautiously out, holding a candle high above her head. Her repulsive appearance seems to strike Waring uncomfortably.

"Surely you have a more presentable servant for the daytime, Julia?" he says, harshly, as he crosses the spacious hall and enters a handsomely-furnished dining-room.

At the insulting words the old woman starts and flushes angrily, but the girl whispers hurriedly in her ear,—

"Hush, Bessie, he's been dreadfully put out to-night. Bring some brandy and leave us alone."

"Well, for your sake, my handsome girl, I'll keep quiet," the crone mutters, and turning away, fetches a decanter and glasses.

"The boys are ready when you are," she says, significantly.

"Very well, I'll be down soon. All here, Bess?" says the man, hastily.

"Aye, and waiting."

She goes then, and Waring, with a heavy sigh, pours himself out a generous allowance of brandy.

"Have some?" he asks, shortly.

"No," curtly, "not yet."

He tosses the brandy off, then turns frowningly to the girl.

"Well?" he says, sullenly.

"Why did you make such a fool of yourself?" she asks, meeting promptly his short query.

He answers readily enough,—

"That white-faced wife—I had seen her before."

"Where?" curiously.

"The night I made that big haul and sent two people out of the world," he says coolly, for the brandy has banished his timid fit.

"No!" cries she, breathlessly.

"Fact, indeed."

"But she didn't know you."

"No, that's my luck. That night I wore a bit of crape over my eyes, and since then I've shaved off my whiskers and beard. I felt rather staggered when first I saw her, but when she stared at me in that unmeaning way, I knew I was safe."

The girl was silent for a minute, then,—

"Let's throw up the game, Jack, and go abroad!" she cries uneasily, "there's danger in your plan."

"Don't be a coward," laughs the man, helping himself to more brandy. "Think of the money we're making my girl."

"Well, see here! cut the acquaintance with the Pomeroy."

"Not I!" he cries, a strange light in his eyes. "I mean to marry the stately Cecil."

"Pshaw! she's in love with young Raincliff!"

He snaps his fingers.

"He shan't stand in my way. And you, I thought, were after Pomeroy himself?"

"He has a wife already," she mutters sullenly.

"Who won't live another month. And even if she did, there's Raincliff! If I take Miss Cecil, he'll be free."

She shakes her head decidedly. "I don't like him. Will Arnold is worth a score of his sort."

Waring frowns, annoyed by her contrariety. "See here!" he cries fiercely, seizing her arm, "you've got to be civil to the Pomeroy."

She winces in his cruel grip, but gives in as she meets his threatening eyes. "Let me go, Jack," she cries feebly. "I'll do what you want, only don't say I didn't warn you."

Loosing her arm, he strides towards the door. "Banish that gloomy expression please," he calls back carelessly. "And give us a good supper when we come up. Will's here, you know, and he'll enliven you," and with a loud, sneering laugh, he leaves the room, banging the door noisily after him.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTMAS has gone by, a very quietly kept Christmas in Stephen Pomeroy's house, for Nora's precarious state of health precludes the possibility of much rejoicing. Still the girls have been very happy. Aided energetically by the Raincliffes and also—to Hugh's intense disgust—by one or two of the young doctors from the hospital, they have decorated the drawing-room and hall with gleaming evergreens—dressing the house in festive garb, and breaking in upon the stillness with their laughing, merry chatter. A hope has sprung up in the girls' anxious hearts—Nora has seemed brighter and better lately, and Stephen, sitting by her couch watching her intently, has noticed how eagerly her eyes follow his sisters' flitting figures, and how pleased she seems when the young men come up and exchange a few words with her.

"If only the remembrance of that night could come back to her!" mutters the good old doctor to Stephen, as he sits beside her and scans the sad, beautiful face. "I believe the shock would cure her."

Stephen shakes his head gravely. "Or harm her, doctor."

"Nonsense!" retorts the old man quickly, and turns to listen to Kitty, who has flown up to Cecil in a state of wild excitement. "News, Cecil, news!" the girl cries gaily, "they are going to give a dance!"

"Whom do you mean?" says Cecil, with equal excitement.

"The boys! It is to be on Humphrey's birthday."

Clasping her pretty hands ecstasically, Cecil turns to Hugh for confirmation of the news.

"Yes," he says, with a lingering smile, "it is even so. I—I thought you would be pleased."

She is silent, but the glad light shining in her sweet eyes seems to him more thanks than he deserves. Suddenly she glances nervously across at Nora.

"Will Stephen think us unfeeling?" she whispers wistfully.

"No, dearest," murmurs Hugh, bending his handsome head near to hers. "Stephen knows about it, and is glad. Come over and ask him," he continues, seeing that she still looks doubtful.

Cecil finds that he is right. Her brother enters eagerly into the discussion, and seems honestly glad that the girls, who have passed such a quiet twelve months, should at last have a chance of enjoying themselves.

"Capital! capital!" cries the doctor.

"Excellent exercise; I approve of dancing. Humphrey don't look very pleased," he adds, sharply. "Ain't you fond of dancing, my lad?"

The boy, who has been sitting by Kitty in an unusually silent mood, colours hotly, and mutters something quite unintelligible.

"He's in the doleful dumps!" cries Kitty, petulantly; "he's as silent as the grave this evening."

To which remark Humphrey retorts in a savage whisper,—

"Perhaps you'd be silent if you'd as much on your mind as I have!" thereby reducing Kitty to a wild state of curiosity. "If you'll come for a walk," he mutters, repenting him of his gruff words, "I'll tell you all."

"After a bit I will," says the girl, eagerly.

"I must hear all about the dance."

"Hugh!" exclaims Cecil, suddenly, who has been pondering the subject, "who is to play the hostess?"

"Oh, by Jove!" he cries, ruefully, "I forgot that! If you had behaved decently, Cecil, I need never have had to worry about it," he adds, in an aggrieved whisper.

"I know!—Auntie Fotheringham!" says Cecil, entirely ignoring that last audacious speech. "She'll be simply delighted."

"The very woman!" ejaculates the doctor, admiringly, rising to depart. "Stephen, I'd like a word with you."

The young man nods.

"Will you come, darling?" he says, bending over Nora.

She laughs in a pleased way, and slips her hand in his.

"Then that question is settled?" remarks Hugh, gladly. "I say, Pomeroy! do you want us to ask the Waring?"

He does not speak cordially; he has taken an intense dislike to Stephen's new friend, perhaps because he so openly admires Miss Pomeroy.

"Oh, no!" cries Cecil, to his great satisfaction, "don't ask them!"

"Why not, dear?" demands her brother, gravely. "Waring was very good to me, and the sister must be rather lonely."

For the first time almost, Humphrey breaks in.

"Oh, yes! ask 'em," he says, hastily; "she's not a bad sort of girl. Ask them, Hugh."

"Well, I will," answers his brother, slowly. Then, as the doctor walks away, followed by Stephen and Nora, "Now, Cecil, for the invites! Let us write them at once."

"By all means," going over to her writing-table; "we should lose no time."

"You won't want help from us," says Humphrey, coolly, as Hugh draws a low chair close to Cecil's. "Come for a stroll, Kitty," he goes on, smiling scornfully at their faint objections, and despatching Kitty, promptly, for her outdoor things. "I've a queer thing to tell you," remarks Humphrey in thrilling accents, as, a few minutes later, they leave the house and turn into the busy thoroughfare; and he looks so solemn as he pilots the girl across the crowded road, that she grows suddenly desperate and ventures on a question.

"What is it, Humphrey?" she asks, deferentially.

"Can't tell you here!" he growls out. "Let's go into Harrison's and have some coffee."

Pushing open the door of a confectioner's shop, he leads the way in and orders coffee with a lordly air, and Kitty, finding that he does not intend to gratify her curiosity, while they wait for the light refreshment, leans back in her chair and takes a rapid survey of her surroundings.

"Which do you admire most here, dear boy?" she asks, presently, with sweet sarcasm, "the coffee, the cakes, or the pretty attendants?"

She laughs agreeably as she speaks, but repents her sharp question as she meets Humphrey's severe glance.

"If you are going to be nasty," he says, coolly, "we'll go back. Yes, although I was going to tell you something that will make your blood curdle."

"Oh, Humphrey!" cries Kitty, faintly, shrinking away from him, "don't talk like that."

"Are you afraid?" asks the lad, anxiously.

"No! no!"

Reassured, Humphrey sinks his voice as he leans across the table.

"I think I've found the man who turned poor Nora's brain."

Kitty drops her spoon with a little crash, and looks round apprehensively.

"Go on," she says, breathlessly.

"You know on the night of the dinner-party I thought there was something queer about that Waring?"

"Yes, I remember," she gasps.

"Well, I've followed and watched him ever since, and yesterday I saw him talking to that maid of Nora's, who was sent away just before the murder took place."

"Well?"

"The murderer must have had an accomplice, someone who knew of the money and jewels. That woman helped him, I'll swear."

Kitty, pale and trembling, stares at the excited boy opposite to her.

"But Nora does not recognise him," she says, feebly.

"No, because, poor girl, she remembers nothing of that night. He was terrified when he first saw her again, but she did not know him, so he feels secure."

"But to stay on here!" stammers Kitty.

"A murderer always does some foolish thing," says the lad, slowly. "He has fallen in love with Cecil. She is keeping him here."

"The wretch!" cries the girl, horror-struck.

"Oh, it's not a bad thing," returns Humphrey, thoughtfully. "He is quite off his guard, and we have only to wait until he betrays himself."

"You will tell Stephen and Hugh," she says, hastily.

"No, not yet. I have not enough to go upon."

"But you will not ask them to your dance?"

"Certainly," coolly, "and they must continue to come to the Terrace. Don't you see that at any moment some chord in Nora's mind may be touched? A laugh, a word, may make her remember him?"

Kitty looks very troubled as she listens.

"I don't know that it's right," she says, slowly.

"Yes, it is," eagerly. "Oh, Kitty, promise me to keep the secret, at least for a few days."

The pleading expression in the grey eyes is too much for her; she gives the required promise.

"You see," goes on Humphrey, triumphantly, "he would never suspect a boy of hunting him down."

"No, indeed. What a good detective you would make, dear!" she says, admiringly, as they leave the shop and walk hastily homewards.

"Rather!" he cries, emphatically, then is silent until they reach the house. "I say," he bursts out then, "I—I have a man helping me."

"What, a detective?"

"Yes, a very smart chap. I pay him to keep an eye on Waring."

Kitty shivers as she runs up the steps.

"I shall want to scream whenever that man goes near Cecil," she says, tragically.

"Please don't, then, or you'll ruin all. I suppose you'd like to make Stephen and Nora happy again?"

"Oh, yes," she says, tentatively; then, throwing her hat and furs, she enters the drawing-room again, feeling guiltily conscious of the secret in her possession.

"Have you had a nice walk, dear?" asks Cecil as they enter.

She allows an expression of glad relief to rest on her fair face as she speaks, and Hugh, with whom she has had several warm arguments over the invites, catches the look and grows terribly depressed.

"I thought you were never coming back!" she continued, expressively; "the time has dragged so—oh! Mr. Raincliffe?"

"It has indeed!" he retorts, leily. The younger ones smile significantly at each other, but wisely keep their thoughts to themselves.

"Is Dr. Vane invited?" asks Humphrey, innocently.

"Of course!" cries Cecil, defiantly.

"How many dances shall you give him?" asks Hugh, grimly, unable to avoid the question.

"Can't say," responds the girl, yawning.

"You have promised me six, remember!" he says, hastily, and with a little fierce frown.

"Have I? how foolish! Kitty, child! you are looking very pale; are you tired?"

Kitty flushes hotly, and hastily disclaims any feeling of fatigue.

"I say, Hugh!" exclaims Humphrey, eager to draw Cecil's eyes away from her sister, "we must be off."

Hugh nods assent; then, goading himself to the effort, branches the subject of his dances once more.

"Oh, dear!" cries the girl, petulantly, "if you bother me I won't give you one!"

"And if I don't?" eagerly.

"Oh, why then—we'll see."

He smiles happily, and with a tender, whispered word of farewell, he drops Cecil's hand, and follows his brother from the room.

CHAPTER IV.

It is the night of the Raincliffe's dance. The house is brilliantly lit up; daintily-dressed girls and men in faultless evening dress pass in quick succession into the handsome hall and on to the great empty drawing-room. There, to the sound of the tuning of instruments, programmes are filled up, and opinions passed on the hurriedly got-up dance. The general verdict is a favourable one, and Hugh and Humphrey as they stand, tall and handsome, beside the stately Mrs. Fotheringham, come in for many a sweet smile and congratulation on the success of their efforts.

"How late the girls are!" mutters Hugh, restlessly, to his brother.

"And the Waring," says Humphrey, his eyes fixed anxiously on the door.

Hugh stares at him.

"Oh, bother them!" he cries, impatiently. "I shouldn't fret if they didn't put in an appearance!"

"I should," mutters Humphrey, to whom their absence means much. "I say," he cries a minute later, "look at Vane!"

Hugh follows the direction his brother's laughing eyes have taken, and sees a very thin, fair young man with a bashful expression and an eye-glass, standing by the door, and scanning each new comer.

"Young donkey!" growls Hugh, "thinks he'll get the first waltz. By Jove! if he has sent her any flowers, and she brings them instead of mine, I'll throttle him!"

"What, in your own house, young man?" cries Mrs. Fotheringham, in amused accents.

"Yes, madam," grimly.

"You are very foolish," she retorts, with a low, merry laugh. "My bonny Cecil could not like him. Ah, here she comes at last!"

"Thank you," says Hugh, gratefully, and moves forward with her to greet her niece.

"They've got Waring with them," whispers Humphrey, hurriedly.

"Humph!" ejaculates Hugh, a feeling of repulsion creeping over him as he watches Cecil advancing, accompanied by the yellow-faced Mr. Waring. She is carrying Hugh's flowers, and is looking very lovely in her soft, flowing gown of can-de-Nil silk, with which harmonizes so well the small bouquet of glowing geranium she holds in her hand. Behind her comes Kitty, gowned in pure white—as becomes her seventeen years. She is talking to Miss Waring, who is clothed in a startling gown of olive green and pale blue judiciously combined and forming a noticeable *tout ensemble*.

"I cannot say really, Dr. Vane," Cecil says, in answer to an imploring question from the young doctor. "Mr. Raincliffe has my programme."

Hugh is delighted and beams on his bashful rival as he hands him the girl's programme.

"Only two, Dr. Vane," says Cecil, hastily.

"And I?" puts in a soft voice close to her.

"I will give you two, Mr. Waring," comes the gracious answer, after an almost imperceptible pause.

A gratified smile steals over his face—he inscribes his name in a bold hand on her programme, and, giving his sister his arm, takes her to a seat.

"I say, Miss Pomeroy," cries Vane in aggrieved tones, "you've given him as many dances as you promised me, and he's a stranger!"

"I never give more than two dances," says Miss Pomeroy, decidedly, taking Hugh's proffered arm.

"Except to Raincliffe," mutters the luck-

less doctor, and is maddened to see how the fair cheeks flush at his remark.

"Oh!" she retorts demurely as she moves away. "Mr. Raincliffe is a very old friend."

Kitty is very much engrossed at that minute in gracefully doling out dances to Humphrey's own particular coterie of friends—a set of harum-scarum medical students who openly worship the young lady and are quite ready to fight over her programme; but, absorbed as she appears, she catches her lovely sister's remark, and smiles in a very pleased way.

"I've some news for you, old girl," whispers Humphrey suddenly in her ear, banishing her pleasant reverie. "Come on, this dance is ours, and the band's striking up your favourite waltz."

"Oh dear! to-night!" murmurs Kitty, in dismayed accents, but she utters no other objection, and glides away with the lad who, to do him full justice, is an excellent dancer.

"Well, your news?" she says, impatiently, when they have gone some down the long room and yet he has not spoken.

Humphrey stands and hesitates, then; bending his head, speaks in a careful, rapid way. "My man has been hunting out Waring's past," he says, hastily. "He finds it is a very shady one. That gentleman's house looks very nice and respectable outwardly, but it hides a dark secret."

"Oh, Humphrey! what?"

"Can't say, it wouldn't be safe. I'll tell you one thing: he can be arrested on another serious charge, even if we can't prove the murder. I say!" breaking off as the waltz ends and he leads her away. "Don't look so horrified!"

"How stupid I am!" she cries. "Is—Is there more, Humphrey?"

"Yes, but come in here," pushing open the door of his own particular apartment. "To-night," he goes on hastily, "Brown means to examine the Waring's house. He finds that there's only one old woman left in charge and she has a weakness for whisky, and has laid in a liberal supply wherewith to beguile the weary hours of her master's absence. Brown calculates that the whisky may make her sleepy, so he means to seize his chance—slide into the house and overhaul Waring's secret. He may find some important link to strengthen our chain of evidence."

"Oh, Humphrey, how risky! I suppose they leave early?" gasps out Kitty, only to be rewarded by a little shake.

"That's all right," he says, steadily. "Brown won't be long, and I don't fancy Waring will leave before supper."

"But the old woman," objects the girl.

"Will not trouble Brown! he has a key and knows what he is about."

"Oh!" she cries, with a timid smile. "I hope he does. Humphrey, will that man be accused soon?"

"In a day or two at the latest. When do they dine at your house?"

"The day after to-morrow—why do you ask?"

"Never mind. Look! here comes Melcolm for you! Go with him and forget our talk—if you can."

Kitty shakes her head doubtfully as she goes away with another medical student, leaving Humphrey lost in meditation. When next she sees him, he is dancing with Miss Waring, and seems to be doing his best to interest her and make her pleased with every thing.

The evening has not been a very happy one to Hugh Raincliffe. Cecil seems to have forgotten those few kind words she had thrown him when she arrived.

She is carrying on a hot flirtation with a certain Captain Verrinport, of the Guards—a golden-haired Apollo of a man, with the very sleepest of blue eyes.

He, accomplished in the art of flirting, and admiring Miss Pomeroy immensely, is doing his best to exercise his dangerous fascinations upon her.

He has met with his match, though. Cecil understands him perfectly, and is only too eager to pay him back in his own coin. But, alas! this righteous resolve does not meet with Hugh's approbation, while it reduces Dr. Vane and the scowling Mr. Waring to the verge of madness.

Miss Waring, seeing how matters stand, does her best to comfort Hugh; and he, maddened by Cecil's perversity, bestows a good deal of attention on the fair Julia, dancing with her—as Cecil carefully notes—quite five times.

The waltz before supper is just over, and Cecil is sitting out the interval with Captain Verrinport in a cosy little room at the end of the hall.

She is laughingly telling him of her hospital experiences, to which he listens languidly, while, with his dark blue eyes fixed on her face, he fans her assiduously.

"How good of you," he murmurs. "Wish I were a child under your care, Miss Pomeroy!"

He sighs heavily as he speaks, and casts such a sentimental glance at her that Hugh, who is coming towards them, grows white with rage.

"Cecil," he says, abruptly, "you go in to supper with me, I think."

"Yes," she answers, meekly, rising at once. Then in a reproachful whisper, "Would you not rather take Miss Waring?"

"Bahaw!" he cries, severely, and nods expressively after the gallant captain's retreating figure. "Would you rather have him?" he asks bitterly.

"No," replies Cecil, mildly, a little frightened by the gleam in the grey eyes, "I'm tired of him."

For a moment Hugh looks happy, but very soon grows grave again.

"You have been dining disgracefully!" he says, gloomily.

"Schave you!" she retorts, gaily. "Come, Sir Doleful, I am starving, take me in to supper."

As she speaks she smiles at him so brightly that he is forced to look pleasant, and, having accomplished her end, she goes with him to the supper room, a little triumphant feeling in her heart as she sees what power she has over him.

While the sound of gay laughter, the clatter of knives and forks, and the tinkling of glasses fill the spacious supper-room, a man leaves the brilliantly lighted house, and, hailing a hansom, gives the man a certain address and bids him drive his fastest.

He springs out when he reaches his destination, waits to see the cab rattle away, then turns a corner and walks swiftly towards a row of handsome houses.

"No. 10," he mutters, pausing before one situated about the centre, and drawing a key from his pocket, which key he slips into the keyhole, and turning it, enters the house.

The evening is nearly over, and the great rooms are emptying rapidly. The band is commencing the dreamy strains of the "Cloisters" waltz, and Hugh is searching everywhere for Cecil, to whom he is engaged for this last dance.

He finds her in the little conservatory, sitting with Captain Verrinport, who, as Hugh approaches, is begging eagerly for a flower from her dainty bouquet.

Cecil is decidedly tired of this new cavalier, and feels no inclination to comply with his request.

"No," she says, as Hugh comes up. "I cannot spoil my bouquet," and gazes at it so tenderly that Raincliffe, catching the look in her eyes, loses all his bad temper as if by magic.

"Our dance, Cecil!" he says, quietly; "the last."

"Oh, yes!" cries the girl, gladly, taking his arm; "the last—and with you!"

Captain Verrinport gazes after them somewhat gravely.

"She's a dainty demoiselle!" he murmurs, admiringly; "and Raincliffe knows it."

Then, with a genuine sigh, he goes in search of his hat and coat.

The dance over, Hugh draws Cecil into the conservatory.

"Plenty of time," he says, coolly. "Wait here for Kitty."

"Auntie will be wondering," she begins, nervously.

"Not she!" imperiously. "Look here, child! when are you going to marry me?"

Cecil looks up with a sudden start, and, meeting his pleading grey eyes, grows naughty and perverse.

"Oh, not yet!" she says, petulantly.

"When, then?" he persists.

Her answer is a startling one.

"When, the destroyer of Nora's happiness is found."

"Bahaw!" he cries, bitterly. "How you trifles! He may never be found!"

Without another word he strides away; and Cecil, pale and silent, joins her aunt, who is listening to a stream of farewells.

As they (Hugh and Cecil) leave the conservatory, Kitty and Humphrey emerge from the shelter of a great palm.

"If the poor old chap could only guess how near it is his wedding-day!" exclaims the lad, laconically. "Ah, he little knows!"

Kitty pales and looks at him nervously.

"Has Brown come back, Humphrey?"

"Yes, my child. When you have all gone I mean to have a long talk with him."

Half an hour later, Humphrey bids his brother good-night, and hurries upstairs to his own room. There the detective awaits him; and the two talk on till it is almost day, comparing notes and arranging their line of action.

CHAPTER V.

"A PENNY for your thoughts, Kitty."

It is the second night after the Raincliffes' dance, and the two girls are lounging before a glorious fire in the drawing-room, awaiting the coming of their dinner guests.

They are dressed alike to-night, in beautifully fitting, but simply made velvet gowns of a soft moss green tint, set off at the throat by a small cluster of palest yellow chrysanthemums; the artistic shade of the velvet uniting well the two fair young faces.

Kitty starts violently as Cecil speaks. She has been wondering secretly if anything will happen to-night, but this she can hardly tell her sister; so lifting her fan to shield her hot face, she replies with a little forced laugh,—

"They—they are not for sale, my dear."

Cecil, not feeling particularly curious, changes the subject.

"What a nuisance it is, these people coming to-night!" she cries, knitting her pretty brows.

"Do you mean Hugh?" asks Kitty, demurely.

"I meant the Waring's," retorts Cecil, calmly. Then before Kitty can speak, she goes on hurriedly, "I was wondering, Kitty, if you had noticed how much better Nora is looking lately. I am beginning to hope that she will remember all, and so help us to find the murderer."

Kitty has no answer ready, and feels intensely relieved when the door opens suddenly, and the two Raincliffes are ushered in. Hugh, to Cecil's great wrath, is in a very stiff, unbending mood, but Humphrey wakes up for his coolness, being in the best of spirits.

"How you must have hurried, Humphrey!" cries Cecil, fixing her eyes wonderingly on the boy's face. "You are quite flushed."

He laughs easily.

"It's excitement," he says, keeping his eyes away from Kitty. "I had an interesting dissecting case to-day."

Cecil turns away with a little disgusted grimace, and Humphrey, with another laugh, marches over to the troubled-looking younger sister.

"Are they coming?" he whispers, hurriedly.

"Yes, yes. Oh, Humphrey, I—"

"Hush! here they are, and Stephen with them. Be cautious, or you'll ruin all."

She turns away trembling, and hardly looks up when it comes to her turn to greet the visitors. They go into dinner in the same order as on that first evening, and Kitty grows more miserable as she sees that Cecil is bestowing all her smiles and pleasant words on the delighted Waring.

Stephen, too, is very attentive to the sister. He is feeling so happy at the improvement in Nora, that he is generally disposed to everyone. By and by the ladies retire to the drawing-room, finding Nora, as on that former occasion, in her accustomed seat by the fire.

She is looking less fragile now, and there is a brighter expression in the sweet blue eyes as they turn gladly to Cecil, who has hurried to her and kneels at her side.

"Will you sing for us, Miss Waring?" says Cecil, contentedly, seeing that the young lady is stifling a yawn; and Miss Waring, being not a little conceited about her singing, goes with alacrity to the piano. The gentlemen appear during the song, and Hugh with not a glance at the pretty girl by Nora, crosses the room and delights the fair Julia by politely turning over for her and listening intently to her next song. Mr. Waring takes his stand by Cecil. Stephen seats himself by Nora, and Kitty and Humphrey disappear between the heavy curtains at one of the windows.

The song comes to an end and the lady is smilingly receiving the murmured thanks of the company when there comes a knock at the door, and a servant entering, tells his master that he is wanted.

"Will you not sing again, Miss Waring?" asks Hugh, courteously, as Stephen leaves the room.

Another song is found, and the girl, with a coquettish glance at Raincliffe, prepares to strike the first chord. But her hands fall with a crash on the notes as Stephen rushes in again, leaving the door ajar, and lifts a ghastly, horrified face to meet their wondering eyes.

"Sir," he says, looking straight at the astonished Waring. "I have some unpleasant news for you."

"Conscience doth make cowards of us all." An awful livid shade steals over the man's face, he growls out an oath, and, obeying the first impulse of his timid heart, he makes a wild dash for the door, only to be stopped there by two stalwart men, who force him back into the room and snap a pair of handcuffs on his wrists.

"What charge?" he jerks out.

"Coining," says one of the men briefly.

"What proof?" he demands then, an insolent tone in his smooth voice.

"Plenty," comes the ready answer: "house been searched, tools found. We've nabbed everyone, even the old woman."

"Searched the house?" echoes Waring, uneasily. "When?"

A quiet-looking man, who has kept in the background, steps forward now and answers the question.

"On the night of Mr. Raincliffe's dance," he says, coolly.

"The old hag told us nothing," cries the prisoner, savagely.

"No, she was in a drunken sleep at the time."

"Curse her!" he growls.

"Besides the tools," goes on the detective, "we found one other thing—here it is!" and he holds up to view a diamond necklace.

"Good Heavens!" hurries out Stephen, fiercely, "that is my wife's! stolen on the night of the murder!"

"You're right, sir, John Dennis! I charge you with the wilful murder of Mrs.

Pomeroy's infant son, also of the child's nurse!"

The man stands glaring at them, stunned and terrified by his awful peril, but his sister starts from her seat and rushes to him.

"Keep up your courage, Jack!" she shrieks, "they can't prove it!"

"Jane Dennis, you are arrested also as an accomplice!"

She laughs carelessly.

"Oh, yes, I know," she says, coolly.

"Well, of all the cool hands!" mutters one of the men admiringly, but keeping his eyes fixed on her, fearing some trick.

"This is a nice thing to happen in a gentleman's house, Mr. Pomeroy!" exclaims the accused man, suddenly rendered audacious by his sister's bold words, and as he speaks he laughs cynically.

That laugh seals his doom. Nora, who has been leaning back in her chair, noticing nothing, is affected in an extraordinary manner by that harsh, sardonic chuckle; she springs to her feet, and holding her husband's hand tightly, glares straight at the guilty man.

"I remember!" she cries, feverishly. "Yes, I remember all that hateful laugh has brought it back!"

"Can you tell us, dear one?" exclaims her husband, throwing his arms round the slender figure.

"Oh, yes. I awoke and heard a noise in my little dressing-room. Toining it was nurse, frightened of being by herself, I jumped out of bed, caught up baby and ran in. He was there, emptying my jewel drawer! I screamed and poor Martha flew in, and rushed at him. In a minute, as it seemed, she was lying dead, and he had turned on me. I had just thought of the telephone, and whistled through it once when he, with that awful laugh, seized me, and wrenched my baby from my arms. I saw him twist a handkerchief round the pretty neck, then my senses left me, I know no more. Oh, Stephen!" with a sudden, wild cry, "is my baby dead?"

Stephen draws the fair head to him, and with an effort tells the sad truth. With a bitter cry she lifts her head, and turns, pale and stern, towards the wretch who has brought her this sorrow.

"Confess!" she cries, in clear, sad tones, "you killed my baby!"

"Yes," he retorts, recklessly. "Jeanette, your maid, was a very particular friend of mine; she gave me plenty of information about the house, and helped me as well as she could. Then, as luck would have it, I overheard your husband talking to Mr. Raincliffe in a city café. He said you would be alone that night, and I knew my chance had come. If the idiotic nurse hadn't interfered she'd most probably have been alive now; but I meant to finish off the baby anyway, to pay you out for turning Jeanette away? She's dead too—my poor girl—throw herself off one of the bridges last week. There now, that's all I'll tell," he concluded, sullenly, and with a restless shake of his handkerchief.

"And plenty it is!" remarks one of the men, grimly.

"Stephen!" cries Hugh suddenly, "look at Nora!"

He may well exclaim; over the fair face has crept a deathly pallor, the burning eyes close, with a cry of bitter agony she falls back in Stephen's arms and loses consciousness.

"The villain!" shouts Pomeroy, savagely, "he has killed her with his cruel words!"

"No, no, dear!" ejaculates Cecil, hastily, "she will be all right. Oh, nurse!" as the woman appears in obedience to Kitty's hasty summons, "help Mr. Raincliffe to carry your mistress upstairs. Stephen, you stay here and see these people away; I shall call you when she is conscious."

Stephen hesitates, but yields at last to her wish; and Hugh carries the slight form upstairs, rushing off then for the doctor, and astonishing the worthy man not a little by his strange news.

"Bless my soul! to think of that Waring or Dennis, as you call him!" he gasps out. "Dear! dear! astonishing!" and wondering and exclaiming, he hurries on his way to the poor young invalid.

As the door closes on Nora's senseless form the prisoner turns with a scowl to his sister, and snidely bids her get her hat.

"Yes, we'd better lose no more time," says Brown, politely, "there's a cab waiting for us at the door."

"Answer me one question, Mr. Pomeroy," says Dennis suddenly, when his sister is ready, and they are leaving the room: "Did you track me down?"

Stephen shakes his head gravely.

"I had no suspicion," he says, slowly, "I thought of you only as the one who saved my life."

"Pity I dragged you back from the horses' feet," cries Dennis, bitterly; "I signed my own death warrant then!"

Stephen goes up to the doomed wretch, and lays his hand on his shoulder.

"Why not drop that heartless tone, and try to make your peace with Heaven?" he says, gravely; but Dennis will not listen.

"Who has done the tracking business then?" he cries flippantly.

"I have," says a boyish voice; and Humphrey steps out from behind the curtains, and stands tall and fearless before the astonished man.

"You!" gasps out Stephen.

"Yes, old friend, I! That first night when he nearly fainted at the sight of Nora, I began to be suspicious. I employed a detective, and, in secret, we traced out his past history, and followed him up."

"You young imp!" snarls the enraged man, glaring angrily at the boy. "If I were only free for five minutes I'd wring your neck!"

"There, that will do," breaks in Brown.

"Come, miss," laying his hand on the sister's shoulder. "Bring him along, my men."

Out through the hall they march him, down the steps and into the cab. Brown follows with the reckless-looking girl, and away they drive, the sister laughing and talking the whole way, though the man gradually relapses into a gloomy silent frame of mind, and stares out of the window with wild despairing eyes.

In time John Dennis and his companions are tried on the first charge of coining; and everyone, with the exception of the principal culprit, is sentenced to a long term of penal servitude.

"Good-bye, Will Arnold!" cries Jane Dennis to one of the men as they are leaving the court. "I'm afraid our wedding must be indefinitely postponed." Then, all at once, her face changes, and she looks sorrowfully at the haggard despairing man who remains alone in the dock to answer the heavier charge against him. "Good-bye, Jack!" she cries in trembling tones, "we've had many a merry day together, but we've come to the end of our tether now."

With a wailing cry she disappears, and the trial goes on.

The prisoner pleads guilty, and in a very short time, as it seems to the wretched man, his sentence is pronounced, and he is taken back to his cell to spend his few last days on earth.

It is a long time before Nora regains consciousness. She lies there helpless and silent, looking like a sweet, crushed lily.

The old doctor and Stephen sit one on each side of the bed, watching her anxiously; the girls stand with hands clasped tightly together waiting for those sweet eyes to open and look on them once more.

Up and down the corridor outside, Hugh and Humphrey are pacing, they will not leave the house until a change comes.

At intervals Kitty creeps out to them with hopeless face.

"No change," she whispers, and disappears again. But at last the door is hastily pushed open, and the girl flies up to them with joy in

her eyes. "She has spoken, she is quite sensible!"

"And she remembers?" asks Hugh, eagerly. "Yes! yes! everything! She spoke at once of Baby, and burst into tears. Dr. Clarke says those tears have saved her from brain fever."

"Thank Heaven! Good-night, little sister," whispers Hugh, softly, bestowing a brotherly kiss on the red lips.

"Good-night, little darling," mutters Humphrey, adaciously, and laughing wickedly as he follows his brother.

"Kitty!" says Hugh, softly, from below, "my love to Nora and—er—Ceoil."

"All right, dear boy," returns Kitty, demurely.

She hears the door close quietly, then, with a little merry laugh, she goes back to the room where Nora lies, and, correctly, but mischievously delivers Hugh's message, imitating him so accurately that she even hesitates—as he had done—before uttering Ceoil's name.

CHAPTER VI.

"Hugh and Humphrey are in the drawing-room, Ceoil; hadn't you better come down?" cries Kitty, three days later, flying into Nora's little boudoir.

It is late in the afternoon, and the room looks very cosy with the cheerful firelight dancing on the dainty tea table drawn close up to Nora's sofa.

The invalid is much better, and has insisted on getting up to-day, so she has been installed in the pretty sitting room, and waits there patiently until Stephen shall come, for he has made her promise not to put in her first appearance in the drawing room until he is home to take her down.

It is five now, he may be back at any minute. The hours have not dragged, for Ceoil has been reading to her, and her sweet, clear voice has had a wonderfully soothing effect upon the listener.

Indeed, Ceoil has just leaned back in her chair, and looking across at the fair, pale girl, is laughingly accusing her of falling asleep.

Cecil has been in a queer, flippancy mood ever since that terrible dinner party; at the same time she has waited on Nora very tenderly, sometimes bringing a smile to the grave face by her merry sallies, sometimes sitting quietly by the poor girl, listening sympathetically to the sorrowful cry for the little lost baby, and soothing Nora's bitter grief by her tender forbearance.

Cecil has kept very closely to the sick room, and the much enduring Hugh has been unable to obtain a glimpse of her; all entreaties are in vain, she will not go down.

To-day Kitty, touched by the sight of Hugh's haggard face, has come up determined to persuade Ceoil to be kinder. She feels very confident of success, for only that morning Nora had questioned her about Hugh, and, scandalized at Ceoil's perversity, had promised to help in persuading her to a more amiable frame of mind.

"Oh, go, dear!" says Nora, gently, as Ceoil shakes her head and frowns a little.

"No," says the young lady, firmly; "I can't leave you."

"Hugh looks wretchedly ill!" murmurs Kitty, dreamily; and as the carefully careless remark Ceoil grows somewhat pale.

"Does he?" she cries, half starting up; then her mood changes, and she sinks back again. "I know why he is wretched," she says, cruelly; "because he can't have his own way. No, I shall not go down, Kitty. I said a very foolish thing to him at his own dance."

"How can you be so cruel!" cries Nora, reproachfully. "To think what he and Humphrey have done for us!"

"He did nothing," murmurs Ceoil, perversely.

(Continued on page 285.)

PRETTY PENELOPE.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE local doctor was brought as quickly as possible to Mrs. Latimer's assistance, and a message was sent to Lady Susan to acquaint her with the news of Marcia's regrettable accident, and with the fact that in all probability the invalid would have to remain at Thicket Croft at least for one night.

Penelope was deeply concerned about her cousin.

"If only Uncle George could be here by an earlier train!" she said to Madge.

For the local doctor had seemed not quite to understand Mrs. Latimer's case. It was not an ordinary sprain evidently, there was no swelling, no discolouration; yet, if Marcia so much as attempted to put her foot to the ground, she declared the agony to be insupportable.

Dr. Gregory was much perturbed about the matter.

"I confess, Miss Deborbrough," he said to Penelope, "I cannot say what is wrong, the ankle is certainly all right. I am afraid from the vigour of the pain that Mrs. Latimer must have managed to severely injure one of the tendons of the leg. I have put a bandage round the part that seems to hurt her most, and I will send a lotion. I should advise that she does not attempt to move, rest is the one essential thing in accidents like this."

"It is funny he cannot give it a name," Madge said, when Penelope repeated what the young doctor had remarked; "but he looks very shy, and I daresay Mrs. Latimer managed to frighten him just a little!"

"I am dreadfully worried about it," Penelope said, and in truth she looked troubled. "Marcia is so very delicate, you know, Madge."

"Is she?"

Miss Riley put the question rather sceptically; as a matter of fact she did not sympathise very much with Marcia's much talked of health.

"A pity," she observed, coolly, "she did not take Dr. Westall's advice and go abroad; then she would not have fallen down and broken her nose or her knee!"

Penelope could not help laughing; but Madge's very clearly expressed dislike to Marcia gave her a little pain, more especially now that her cousin was under her roof and enduring such apparent suffering.

"Dear Madge!" she said, protestingly.

Madge gave the lovely face a kiss.

"Dear Pen!" she answered.

"I don't want you to be unjust or unkind, Madge!"

"I flatter myself I am never unjust and rarely unkind, my Pen."

"Not sometimes?"

"Never!"

Pen paused.

"But, Madge, it is unkind to be unsympathetic about the sufferings of others."

"Bosh! I don't mean bosh to the sufferings of others, Pen. I mean it only for Marcia. Now," Madge threw a piece of biscuit to each of her dogs, "now I suppose you will have a fit if I say it is my honest opinion Mrs. Denis Latimer could walk to the road beyond at this present moment as well as either you or I!"

"But, Madge," Pen's colour rose, "you really do go too far. Your antagonism makes you say very wrong things. Why should you suggest that Marcia is shamming an accident when anyone can see she is in great pain?"

"I did not see her fall!" Miss Riley observed with a curiously stubborn air.

Pen looked at her friend for a moment without speaking, and Madge regarded her with tender admiration.

"I think you are prettiest when you are angry, Pen," she said, casually. "Your eyes

are simply the most beautiful things I have ever seen."

Penelope evaded this compliment.

"I am sure you would not say that sort of thing if you knew how you hurt me, Madge," she said, speaking gravely.

"My dear!" Madge purposely misunderstood her. "You cannot expect me to be dumb and blind. You are pretty and——"

"I did not mean that!" Penelope cried hurriedly. "You know I did not!"

Miss Riley kept her two pets in a state of anxious expectation for a few seconds, then threw them another and final instalment of biscuit.

"I won't say another thing to vex you, Pen. I give you my promise," she said frankly, as she rose and brushed some crumbs from her gown.

"Ah! but will you promise not to think of them?" Pen asked, a little wistfully. She was anxiously expecting an arrival from Lady Susan's. Of course it would be Denis who would come; he was sure he must be a little alarmed, no doubt her messenger would have exaggerated matters. She could only hope Lady Susan had not been upset by the news.

"I must go back to Marcia," she said hurriedly. Mrs. Latimer had been carried upstairs to a bedroom, and Mrs. Warriner was attempting to administer sympathy and consolation. "Madge, will you stay here, and when Denis comes will you send up and let me know?"

Just as Penelope was turning to leave the hall, one of the servants brought her a telegram.

"Oh! how sorry I am! It is from uncle George; he cannot come, Old Mrs. Langridge is very ill!"

Madge Riley was most emphatic in her regret.

"I am more than sorry," she said. "How tiresome Mrs. Langridge always is! I am sure Dr. Westall would have soon set Mrs. Denis to rights, and relieved all your anxiety."

"This is a disappointment!" Penelope said to herself with a sigh, as she went upstairs slowly; somehow she had dwelt very much on this approaching visit of her old friend. He had always an excellent effect on her nervous system, freshened her up as it were, dispelling a hundred and one little feelings that were apt to gather about her brain, in her many hours of solitude; and then during the last part of the afternoon she had desired a more practical need of him. She was afraid that Marcia might have given herself some secret twist or strain which did not show clearly at the first, but might be attended with serious results.

Dr. Gregory was a nice young man, but he was young and very shy, as Madge had said, and did not inspire great confidence.

"I shall ask Denis to telegraph to town for some one since Uncle George cannot come," she mused on. "I am afraid Dr. Gregory does not quite understand what is wrong."

A perfectly true theory. Poor Dr. Gregory, already a hopeless victim to Penelope's beauty, had driven to his home rather depressed.

He was by no means an inferior medical man, in fact he was extremely clever; but Mrs. Latimer's case puzzled him, and he felt he had not covered himself with glory on this the occasion of his first visit to Thicket Croft.

It would have argued an even greater amount of brain and scientific knowledge than he already possessed, could Philip Gregory have determined the actual seat of the mischief accruing from Marcia's fall.

He was lost in the solution when he said to himself, angrily, that he did not believe Mrs. Latimer had hurt herself in the very least; but that, of course, was a view of the case he considered politic to keep entirely to himself.

Penelope found her cousin in a resigned frame of mind. Marcia was in a big chair, with her right foot stretched out before her. She had taken off her small mantle and hat, and wore a pale worn look on her face; her

expression in all save her eyes was one of utter weariness. The eyes, however, were very restless.

It struck Mrs. Warriner once or twice that she found Marcia's eyes to be exceedingly unpleasant; there had been such a shifty way of evading her gaze, and there were fleeting expressions in them which gave her a sense of uneasiness though not quite to be explained or comprehended. Vague reminiscences of having heard Marcia called "odd" round about Latimer-court flitted through Mrs. Warriner's mind, and aroused within her a sentiment that she fully shared in this opinion.

There was decidedly something odd altogether about this young old-looking woman with pinched drawn mouth and hot restless eyes. She was so marvellously changed from the Marcia Rochdale of a year ago.

"She gives me a sort of creepy sensation," Mrs. Warriner declared to her sister when she went downstairs leaving Penelope alone with her cousin. "I don't like her, and yet I am sorry for her, Madge."

"For Heaven's sake why? Sorry! What have you to be sorry about?—a woman who has everything in this world to make her happy, and who deliberately chooses to be miserable simply by encouraging her vile temper and giving vent to her detestable nature! I cannot see where any pity is required for Marcia Latimer, she is a poor mean thing. My pity is all for Denis. What a horrible mistake he has made!"

Mrs. Warriner always smiled at her sister's vehemence, though she felt Madge had a fault of speaking too plainly at times, and, like Penelope, she could not quite go with her sister in her frank utterance of contempt and dislike for Marcia.

"I know you don't like her, Madge," she said, "and I know she has been very rude to you; but all the same that does not alter my feeling. I am sorry for Marcia. One must pity a woman for wrecking her own chance of happiness so wilfully, and after all, perhaps, it is not her fault. She has a bad temper. We are none of us born perfect."

Miss Riley listened to these remarks calmly.

"You have a right to your opinion, Daisy, of course, and I have a right to mine, and as far as it concerns Marcia I don't think it is likely to change very much. I know we are none of us born perfect, we have all got some big fault and blemish, but most of us try to tackle it and get it under. Marcia might easily curb her temper and subdue her insane jealousy if she liked, but instead she does nothing but encourage it, and make herself a burden to everyone around her. I detest jealousy and suspicion!" Madge finished firmly, "and I tell you frankly, Daisy, if she were my wife I should just hang her over her head and leave her to herself to recover."

"You give yourself a desperate character," laughed Mrs. Warriner. "I only hope you will not carry out such drastic treatment with the unfortunate individual fate has chosen for your husband."

Madge blushed rosy red.

"My husband, if ever I have one, will, I trust devoutly, never give me an opportunity of exerting my strength in such a manner; but, listen! there is a carriage—it must be Denis. I promised Pen I would let her know when he came; let us go and meet him."

It was not Denis, however, but Lady Susan herself and alone.

She was apparently greatly perturbed about the accident, but anyone knowing her well would have easily seen that she had something else on her mind as well.

She listened to Mrs. Warriner's account of everything in silence for a moment, then she frowned.

"I hope it is nothing serious. I don't understand why young Gregory could not give her all the medical aid she requires, he is a clever young man and holds a good position in his profession."

"Penelope thought Mr. Latimer would in all

probability telegraph for someone from London."

Lady Susan's frown deepened almost into a line of pain as Mrs. Warriner spoke.

"Denis will no doubt do so if he finds it necessary," she said, and then she rose to go upstairs.

Penelope, warned of her arrival, came flying down to greet her. She was glad to feel Lady Susan's arms put tenderly about her, and to respond to her dear friend's greeting. She was full of anxiety, lest the old lady had been troubled by the news.

"I hope there is nothing very wrong," she said, as she led Lady Susan for a moment into her own room before going in to see Marcia. "She certainly seems to be in less pain. How good of you to come dear Lady Sue. I do hope you are not upset at all."

Lady Susan sat down in one of the many ornate-covered chairs that were scattered about in Penelope's dainty bedroom.

"I am very much upset," the old lady said, in an abrupt manner, very unlike her usual, sweet, gentle way. "Penelope, I am very much upset, my dear."

Penelope knelt down beside her and took the small, withered hands in hers.

"I was afraid of this," she said, sorrowfully. "I wanted to see David before he rode over to you. Servants always exaggerate."

"I am not speaking of the accident," Lady Susan broke in quickly. "I don't think, from all I have heard from Mrs. Warriner, that there is really any cause for anxiety, and I have great faith in Philip Gregory. You may depend upon it if he could not find anything radically wrong that there is nothing radically wrong to find. No," Lady Susan drew a sharp breath, "I am troubled on a far more serious subject." She paused a moment, and then said, almost curly, "They had a most terrible quarrel to-day. I don't know what happened. I was in the conservatory with William looking over my flowers. I heard his voice sounding all that way from her room. It was horrible, Pen. I have never experienced anything more painful. My life has had sorrows, but I have never known such a sorrow as must live in my poor Denis's heart at this moment!"

Penelope turned very pale, and her hands, holding Lady Susan's, grew suddenly cold. She could not speak. Lady Susan was too deeply impressed and agitated herself to notice the girl's ashen face and anguished expression.

"The servants were all horrified. Shorten was upstairs in my room at the time, and heard every word. She came to me as white as a ghost. I had to speak quite sharply to her, for she would persist in saying Mrs. Denis was a madwoman and would do us all some mischief. As you say, servants always exaggerate, but upon my word, Pen, I can liken Marcia's conduct to nothing less than the conduct of a madwoman! As soon as Shorten came to me I went back to the house, I felt I must go to her; but evidently the fury was over, for I heard no sound, and as I went in I met Denis on the stairs."

Lady Susan stopped abruptly for an instant. Her voice was unsteady when she went on speaking.

"I have seen many painful sights, my child, but none that have given me greater pain than the sight of Denis's face as he stood before me. His voice was quite husky, and he looked like a man who had gazed on some horrible thing, something that had touched the core of his heart and brought immeasurable suffering. I put my hand out to him in silence, and he held it in silence for a moment, then he tried to say something to make an apology. Of course, I would not hear it, Pen. I had only to look into his eyes to read the misery he was feeling. He told me he should go out and have a long walk."

"I may not be in until dinner time, will you forgive me?" he said, as he was turning away. I called him back, Pen, and kissed him and gave him a blessing. I would have

said something comforting if I had known what to say, but what comfort could I offer? I watched him go through the doorway, and my heart bled for him. I know the Latimer pride, and I could not help feeling grateful that his mother was not alive to know shame as his sorrow."

Lady Susan passed a hand hurriedly over her eyes, tears were rolling down her cheeks. Penelope had risen and was standing a little behind her. She had not uttered a single word. There was such an indescribable agony in her throat she could not have spoken even to save her life.

The old lady could not see her or notice her strange demeanour fortunately, for had she done so she must have gathered a little of the truth, and her trouble would have been increased a hundredfold immediately. Despite her sharply-spoken reprimand to her servant Shorten, Lady Susan did not feel comfortable about Marcia. It seemed to her that there must be some terrible cause for such an outbreak of wild, frenzied anger as had come to her. No sane woman could have conducted herself in such a way as her firm opinion.

Her horror and, it must be owned, her newly-born fear of Denis's strange wife would therefore have increased beyond all description could she have been led to associate Penelope in the slightest way with Marcia's jealousy.

A glance at the girl's face must have aroused some suspicion of the truth that Denis was closer, dearer to Penelope than life itself; and although Lady Susan would have had no ground for imagining that the quiver of this day had any connection with her child (as Penelope herself did not for one instant imagine it), she would most naturally have dreaded future possibilities.

"Who knows what such a fury might not do?" the old lady had thought to herself as she had been driven over to Thicket Croft. "In one of these fits of blind passion she must be absolutely uncontrollable. Oh dear! to think such a terrible scene should have been played under my roof; to remember that boy's agonized face! to realize his future life with such a woman!"

She said all this out loud to Penelope. She was so unbinged and excited, she talked on very quickly, thus giving Penelope time to collect her senses and rally her forces; and there was another blow in store for the girl. Every word Lady Susan said beat almost sharply on to her tortured brain.

The rest of her story was but the realisation of a great fear and trouble Penelope had grown to anticipate.

"When I had watched Denis go away I turned and went into my den. I felt I could not bear her. Fortunately we had had luncheon, so I had no absolute necessity for meeting her just for the moment. Shorten came to me by and by, and said Mrs. Latimer's maid wished to know if I was going out driving, as her mistress would like to join me. I sent back word that I should not drive, but that the carriage was at her disposal; then I went to my bedroom to lie down, and so I escaped her. About half an hour before your man arrived with the news of her accident, these two notes came by hand. Denis must have written them from the railway station, for it was one of the porters who brought them. Read for yourself, my dear." Lady Susan gave Penelope an open envelope. "I cannot blame him, poor boy. There is a limit to everyone's endurance, and I felt when I looked on his face that Denis could endure no more for the moment—and I was right, you see. I cannot blame him—no; and I can only hope it will have a beneficial effect, though I doubt it."

Penelope opened Denis's note. It was written in pencil very hurriedly. She knew its contents before reading. He had gone; he could bear no more. Oh! how she had dreaded this!

"DEAR AUNT SUSAN,—This is a line to tell you not to be alarmed or surprised if I do not

turn up for dinner to-night. To tell you the honest truth, I shall in all probability stay in London for the next twenty-four hours—perhaps longer. I don't feel in a mood for the ball, and I have already telegraphed an excuse to the committee for my non-appearance. Give a business apology to your guests this evening for my absence from your dinner-table; and try and forgive me for seeming, I fear, both rude and neglectful.—Your affectionate boy,
"D. L."

"I have written to my wife!"

"And here is the note," Lady Susan said, holding out a second envelope. "I think, Pen, dear, if you don't mind, I shall decide not to see Mrs. Latimer just for the moment. I am not quite equal to it. I feel I should work myself into an agitation beyond words, and I must get back quickly. You know I have a little dinner to-night. I shall be very wicked for once, and give Marcia's accident as the cause for their joint absence. Do you not think that will be best!"

Penelope had one final struggle with herself. She was trembling from head to foot when she spoke.

"Wise and best," she said, in a low, hurried voice. She turned to a bell. "I will have this note sent to Marcia at once," she added; "and—and I quite understand, dear Lady Susan, you would rather not go to-ha. I don't think it will be necessary to let her know you have come. She is not to know you brought this letter."

Penelope stood for one moment when her face was turned from her friend, and pressed her hand over her eyes and over her lips. At this juncture she felt she would have given all she possessed in the world had Marcia Latimer been anywhere but under her roof. For the first time in her life Penelope allowed anger to dominate her. The thought of Denis was the cause of this, and the memory of his wrongs made Marcia suddenly loathsome in her eyes.

"I do not want to see her. I do not want to have anything to do with her!" she said to herself; passionately, in this instant, and then she shivered as with sudden cold—a strange chill feeling had crept over her heart. Penelope had never known such a feeling before. Was it anger—was it presentiment or fear? She could not have told. She did not understand. She did not even question. She only realised it, and the realisation was horrible and definite in its entirety.

CHAPTER XXX.

MARCIA took the note from the maid with a quiet word of thanks.

"Who brought this?" she asked, as she glanced at the writing, turning deathly pale as she recognised it was from Denis.

The maid answered she did not know; but she answered clumsily, and Marcia immediately fathomed there was something behind her manner. As a matter of fact Penelope had given the note to the maid when she answered her bell, and had told her to take the letter to Mr. Latimer, adding—

"Do not mention Lady Susan is here."

Alone, Marcia paused before opening her letter. Her face had grown a curious whiter-grey, and two bright patches of colour showed up for a moment on this dull surface. Her eyes were fixed and hard, her heart beating wildly.

The anger of a few hours before was smouldering in her heart. She had rarely been so angry before. She had felt absolutely mad in that moment; she did not remember all she had said; but Denis's words, Denis's face, Denis's strong touch on her wrist at one particular moment—these stood out before her eyes in clear strong colours. Marcia would never forget them, she had been unable to control herself or to play her self-appointed part any longer, her jealousy could bear no more

constraint. She had flung everything to the winds, and let forth the stream of her venomous hatred for Penelope at last.

She could see now as she sat staring before her the agonised look that had come over the man's face as she spoke Penelope's name, the tender eagerness with which he would have shielded that name from her attack.

She conjured up bit by bit the scene that had passed between them. She felt once again the frenzy of impotent rage in that she could force no word, no retort from his white lips; and then she had again the sense of savage joy when she realised she had roused him at last, and he was about to answer her. How those cold, few words of answer burnt into Marcia's brain! Would she ever forget them?

The unutterable scorn, the contempt, the weariness, the horror of her, and the love unspeakable, the reverence, the adoration that filled his whole being for that other.

In that moment Marcia's mean spirit recognised its master. She cowed before Denis's quiet, dignified wrath. She winced at his cold contempt; but the shame within her was burnt up instantly and utterly when he spoke his love for Penelope.

"If I live a hundred years," Denis had said, "if I have to endure a century of such a hell as you have made of my life this one year we have been together, you can never rob me of my greatest joy, the remembrance of my love, a love so pure, so great, so beautiful that not even daily contact with you can bring a shadow upon it. You have tortured me often enough, Marcia, with senseless jealousy, you have held me unworthy and untrue to my honour, you have credited me with doing your terrible wrongs. I have borne all that in silence; but now I speak out, for the future I will stand this sort of life no more. I am prepared to do my duty by you in the fullest sense of the word. I will consent to forget the past, to forgive it also; but one thing I will never forgive. If you once venture to say one single word against Penelope, if you offer her any gratuitous insult, or endeavour in any way to harm or trouble her, I have done with you. No duty on earth will keep me to you, and I will have no hesitation in declaring to the world the reason that I have in separating myself from you. This is my absolute determination; it rests in your hands, and yours alone, whether I must carry it into action!"

Marcia's reply had been a burst of wild laughter, and a torrent of vituperation against Penelope. She had not stopped to choose her words. She had said the most terrible, the most horrible things one woman could say of another.

When she had ceased to draw breath, Denis had put his hand on her arm for an instant.

"And you are my wife—my wife!" he had said, in slow, deliberate tones; then slowly and distinctly he added, "Heaven be thanked that my child is dead!"

He had looked into her face for an instant, and then he had loosened his hold, had turned and left her.

She was used to this method of his. Sometimes he had endured the whole of her fit of fury in complete silence. Marcia had not given his manner much thought. She was in no mood to discriminate or qualify.

Had Denis gazed for a single instant the absolute condition of her mind, he would not have acted as he did. He only foresaw the usual ending to a rather worse scene than usual.

Marcia would fall into a sullen state, she would in all probability be too ill to go to the ball, and possibly she would have to go to bed instead; there was always a terrible reaction after such intense excitement.

He determined suddenly to leave her for a time. He had, indeed, come to the end of his tether, he could endure no more. He felt if he remained with her as he was now he might be even tempted to forget that she was a woman, and do what would be a lasting stain on him for life.

He would go away for a little while, and the thought came to him, as it had come to Lady Susan, that perhaps such an action might have a beneficial effect.

So far he had resorted to no drastic measures with Marcia. It was against his nature to hurt anyone, so he had borne with his life as well as he could; but now—now, with the memory of her cruel, horrible words against Penelope searing his very brain, Denis felt he must sever himself, if only for a short time, from his wife, and so impress upon her that she had at last gone too far, and that his determination to permit no more was firm and unalterable.

Marcia had not imagined such an action. She had come to Thicket Croft armed with one intention, filled with one desire, a craving to be alone with Penelope to give vent in some way, how she could not for the moment determine, to the fury of hate and savage jealousy that filled her every vein.

All at once she had conceived the idea of spending this night of the ball under Penelope's roof. She had no desire to go near the dance. Her object in coming to Lady Susan's had been more than well achieved. She had been eager to know the truth exactly about Denis and her cousin; the knowledge had come to her sooner than she had expected. The truth was never worse than her fevered brain had imagined.

Now there remained only the gratification of causing some pain, some discomfort, some mortification to Penelope in punishment for all she had done directly or indirectly.

She had no definite plan of action as she drove through the glorious spring sunshine to Thicket Croft, her face set in sullen anger, her restless eyes seeing nothing of the beauty about her, her thoughts dwelling on nothing but the moment of her revenge, which she resolved should be no longer delayed; yet with quick cunning she foreshadowed the possible events of this particular evening.

Thicket Croft would be practically empty after dinner; servants, of course, there would be, but these did not count; what Marcia dwelt on was the absence of Penelope's friends. Madge Riley and her sister would be sure to go early to the ball and return late.

"If I could stay there, if I had some excuse to be with her alone, if something could happen to detain me!"

This was the burden of her thought, and her cheeks flushed with a dark flush of excitement as she conjured up the joy, the satisfaction she could obtain from such a chance.

"I will insult her. I will make my words eat into her heart. I know her. I can make her suffer, and I will do it. I will shame her. I will draw her secret out and stamp on it. Denis can talk as much as he likes—he will never be even with me—he dare not do anything for her, his hands are tied. Let him even try to protect her! I will let all the world know what he does—and he will ruin her socially for ever."

A light had come into Marcia's eyes as she thought of all this; her plan of action was decided before she reached the gates of the Croft. She would pretend some illness, it did not matter what; it would be so easy to deceive Penelope, she said to herself with undisguised contempt. She would remain at the house all night; Denis would have to go to the ball; her illness should not be sufficient to keep him away. She would avoid any meeting with Lady Susan, it would be easy to go straight back to Latimer Court from Thicket Croft. Marcia knew she must be even lower in her hostess's estimation now than she had been before—she gave a little of her surplus hate to Denis's great aunt. In the future she would never let herself be brought in contact with Lady Susan, that was very certain. She had used her for a purpose; that purpose accomplished, Marcia would never willingly gaze on the old lady again. As it was, she could barely bring herself to be civil to her self-appointed hostess.

It was the excitement and a little nervous-



[MARCIA ROSE TO HER FEET, AND STOOD LOOKING ABOUT HER IN A CURIOUS, STRAINED FASHION.]

ness as to how events would proceed, that made Marcia seem so bright and almost genial on her entrance at the Croft. The accident was the result of a sudden determination; it had worked even better than she had anticipated. Marcia soon settled the question of Dr. Gregory—it was easy to pretend to some mysterious pain with a raw ignorant country bumpkin, as she immediately designated the young doctor.

Lady Susan's arrival discomposed her for a moment but only for a moment. She feared Denis might have come too, and she had no desire that Denis should snatch her revenge, poor as it was, from her grasp at the last moment.

She soon learnt that Denis had not come—doubtless he knew nothing of her supposed accident, in all probability he would not return to Lady Susan's until too late to get over to the Croft. His anxiety, if he felt any, would be set at rest by Lady Susan; but even if he did come, Marcia would have had her opportunity, and have made good use of it.

The note brought to her was something she had not anticipated. Her face was white to the lips as she read it.

"In all probability," Denis wrote curtly, "it may be some time before we shall meet again. You have gone a step too far, Marcia. I can bear with you no longer—the horrors of my daily life are too much for me. I don't know whether you think I spoke lightly to-day when I said I should separate from you; but if you did think so, you will see you were utterly mistaken. I gave you the terms of my final determination. You deliberately chose to disregard them; you said things this afternoon I will never forget—never forgive. There can be no question of future life with you."

"I desire there shall be no scandal—there will be none if you act as I direct, and for once use some command, and conduct yourself with dignity. I have made excuses to Lady Susan. I go to London direct, and will

write to you from there to-night, placing before you the best course for you to pursue under the present miserable circumstances which you, and you alone are responsible for.

"I have done my best, Heaven knows, but I am only human, and to-day the chain has broken, I can endure no longer. Had you given me half a chance, had you shown the faintest shred of a woman's heart, you would not have found yourself in the position you will hold from this date forward in my life."

As Marcia ceased reading she trembled from head to foot, a deep red flush spread over the pallor of her temples and surrounded her eyes, the paper flitted from her nerveless grasp and fell to the ground. She did not heed it, she was going over and over the one thought, the one bitter, maddening thought. Denis was gone—Denis had left her—Denis was lost to her for ever!

A thousand pictures of the future danced before and dazed her eyes. She rose to her feet, heedless of her supposed accident, and stood looking about her in a curious strained fashion, as with the air of one who seeks some glimmer of light in heavy darkness.

All at once she gave a sharp laugh and flung out her arms with a wild gesture, and then she began to walk to and fro, her eyes going round and about her in the same odd fashion, her fingers tightly interlaced, her lips set in a smile. A sudden sound outside made her stand still for an instant; then swiftly, with an indescribable cunning, she was back in her chair in the same invalid attitude as before. The flush had gone from her brows, she was very pale, and her lips were dry and white. The footsteps passed her door. She crouched in the chair and stared at the letter lying tossed on the hearth-rug.

"Denis is gone—but he is here! Denis is gone—he can't protect her, he can't save her. He is very clever," with a repetition of the senseless laugh,—"oh! very clever, but he is not as clever as I. To-morrow he will

come back; he will think of her and be afraid. Yes, to-morrow he will come, but he has forgotten to-night. He has gone and she is here. She will be with me alone. She shall hear me speak, and she shall answer to me for her sin. She shall answer to me—answer to me!"

The wild frenzy of thoughts melted into a decisive action as the footsteps returned, the door opened and someone came in. It was Mrs. Warriner.

She withdrew softly as she saw Marcia leaning back with closed eyes.

"She is asleep," she whispered to Penelope, who was just outside the door. "It is the best thing for her. Come away, Pen, you look so pale and tired. You have no more colour than a sheet. You have not seen Madge's frock. She has spread it out for your approval. You can be with Mrs. Latimer all the evening when we are gone. You can give us half-an-hour now!"

Penelope followed mechanically. That strange chill was on her heart, and as Mrs. Warriner spoke she shivered. She did not know why, but she felt all at once an intense longing to ask her friends to forgo the ball and stay with her this night. This was only a momentary weakness, however, and she shook it off swiftly and determinately; but the chill on her heart could not be shaken off, it remained and threatened to stay a while longer.

(To be continued.)

THE common balsam has a most singular method of disseminating its seeds. When they are ripe and prepared for germination the seed pod explodes with the slightest touch, and the seeds are scattered in every direction with such force as to carry them a distance of 20ft. or 30ft. Plants have many curious methods of scattering their seeds, but there is none stranger than the vegetable artillery represented by the balsam.



[ADELA DACRE TURNED SWIFTLY ON THE INTRUDERS, AND BROKE INTO A LOW LAUGH.]

BASIL'S BRIDE.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MRS. DACRE HEARS THE TRUTH.

As the sound of that furious ring at the bell echoed through the little Villa, Mrs. Dacre rushed into the sitting-room, where Dolores was standing by the table, pale and trembling.

"What is it?" breathed the girl.

"I don't know. There are three men outside, and in all probability one of them is your husband," replied Mrs. Dacre, hurriedly. "No doubt they have come in search of you."

"But how do they know I am here?"

"That is impossible to say. It is likely enough we have been watched, and tracked in spite of all the precautions I took. But there is no time to discuss that now. The question is, do you feel strong enough to see your husband—supposing it is he—and tell him that you are resolved not to go back to him?"

Adela Dacre asked the question confidently enough, for she had fallen into the not unnatural error of believing that Dolores did not care for Basil. For a minute the young wife did not speak, but remained with her eyes lowered. Then she shivered.

"No," she said, "I cannot see him. What shall I do?"

"You must remain in hiding until he is gone," was the prompt response. "I have prepared for such a contingency as this. Follow me, and do not speak, but first of all wrap your shawl well round your shoulders, for it is cold outside this room."

Dolores did as she was bidden, and the two women crept silently upstairs. Mrs. Dacre leading the way to a front bedroom. Just as they crossed the threshold, there came another peal at the bell—louder this time than before.

"Don't be frightened," whispered the elder

woman, reassuringly. "They can't get in till I choose, for they would hardly dare to break open the door."

As she spoke, she had approached a large mahogany wardrobe that occupied nearly the whole of one side of the room, and thrown open one end wing, where a number of dresses were hanging. On pressing a spring, the back slid into a groove, and an opening large enough to contain a man was revealed.

"Go in there," said Mrs. Dacre, holding aside the dresses. "It is well ventilated from the top, so there is no danger of your getting asphyxiated. If you remain perfectly quiet, all will be well, and I will come up and let you out the moment the coast is clear. You don't mind being left alone here, do you?"

Dolores replied in the negative, and stepped into the hiding place, while Mrs. Dacre again pressed the spring, and the false back slid into its place. Then the woman went downstairs, where, in the hall, she was confronted by old Elspeth, who seemed to take the unusual noise and clamour very calmly.

"Will I be for letting them in now?" she inquired, and her mistress replied in the affirmative, while she went back to the sitting-room, and waited, with beating heart, for the advent of her visitors.

She was a strong woman, mentally and physically, a brave woman, and unscrupulous. In all her life she had only cared for one person beside herself, and that person was her supposed daughter. Even for her, her affection partook something of the nature of a tigress's fierce jealousy for its young. She loved Dolores because she believed her to be a part of herself, not because the girl was sweet and gentle and lovely, and she counted on a future when they both would enjoy the riches left by Sigismund Verschoyle & Maur. Hence, ever since the marriage of Dolores—which had been a fearful blow to her—she had looked upon Basil as her natural enemy—the man who had thwarted all her plans, and she hated him accordingly.

The time had now come when she must openly declare her identity. She would have infinitely preferred not doing this, but there was no alternative left her.

The door was thrown open, and Basil and Lascelles entered. In the background stood a third man, but he remained just without the threshold, until it should be necessary for him to come forward.

Basil was naturally much surprised at the apparition that confronted him. In the tall, upright, imperious-looking woman, with her dark hair, her rich attire, and her flashing eyes, he recognized—not Traviçe, but the mysterious lady whom he had seen with Mr. Verschoyle on that eventful night at the White House!

Lascelles, on the contrary, saw exactly what he expected to see—Adela Dacre, a little older, a little harder, but in other respects unaltered.

"What does this intrusion at this late hour mean?" she asked, in a haughty, disdainful manner, flashing her glance rapidly from one gentleman to the other.

"It is hardly necessary for you to ask," replied Lascelles—for Basil had hardly recovered from his astonishment sufficiently to answer the question. "We are here in search of Mrs. Chesham, who, we know, accompanied you to this house."

Adela Dacre laughed.

"Then you have come on a wild-goose chase. Mrs. Chesham is not here, and even if she were, I would not give her up to you."

"That remains to be proved," put in Basil, quietly. "It is not a question of your willingness, but of your authority."

"And my authority is unquestionable," exclaimed the woman, drawing her fine form up to its fullest height. "I am Dolores' mother."

If she expected to make an impression by this announcement, she was disappointed, for it was received with the utmost calmness by

her hearers—who, as we know, were quite prepared for it.

"A mother's authority—and I do not acknowledge your title to it—fades before that of a husband," said Basil, who, while he appeared very pale and thin from the effects of his recent illness, yet looked the picture of resolution.

She turned upon him fiercely.

"Not when a husband has behaved to his wife as you have behaved to Dolores—not when he has treated her with consistent neglect, and at last driven her forth from her home by his cruelty!"

The young man winced. It was hard to have these accusations levelled at him—harder still to feel that he, in part, deserved them.

"With that you have nothing to do. I have come for my wife, and I shall not leave without her."

"In that case, you had better sit down," said Mrs. Daore, with an insolent laugh, "for I am afraid you will have a long time to wait."

"Then you refuse to tell me where she is?"

"I do. You will know her whereabouts by-and-by when she has succeeded in getting a legal separation from you," boldly replied Mrs. Daore, with added assurance.

Basil glanced significantly at Lascelles, and the latter, stepping forward, said, quietly,—

"You have known me for some years, Mrs. Daore. I am quite aware that I had not the honour of being a favourite with you, but I would ask you one question: have you ever had reason to believe that I would tell a deliberate lie?"

She looked at him suspiciously.

"No. I, at least, have never found you out in one."

"Then perhaps you will believe me when I tell you that the statement contained in this paper"—he took from his pocket a copy of Sara Harding's confession, and held it out to her—"is absolutely true. I had it from the woman's own lips, and, elsewhere, I have it in her own handwriting. Read it, and then you will see how grievously you have deceived yourself in fancying you were the mother of Dolores."

Growing whiter than death, the woman snatched the paper from his hands, and perused it swiftly. Twice she read it over, then it fell from her nerveless fingers.

"It is false!" she cried, hoarsely, while even as she spoke she saw the vision that had lured her on, during all these years, fading away as the morning mists fade before the sunshine.

"It is false!"

"It is Heaven's own truth!" replied Lascelles, solemnly; and then, with an awful cry of pain and fury—with the baffled sense of failure, and the miserable conviction that the girl she had plotted and schemed for, had loved and served, was not her own child—Adela Daore fell forward on the couch.

It was only for a few minutes she thus gave way to her rage. Then she sprang to her feet and confronted Lascelles.

"Whether this be true or not, Dolores looks upon me as her mother, and she shall never know otherwise!" she exclaimed. "The game is not over yet, for you have not found the girl, and, what is more, you never will find her."

It was the empty threat of a woman carried away by her own fury, but it made Basil shiver with a sudden apprehension. This woman was capable of anything—of murder even.

But if he was not equal to the occasion, there was someone else who was. Osborne, who had listened quietly, but attentively, to all that had been said, now came to the front.

"Perhaps the lady will think differently when she hears that it is my painful duty to take her into custody," he observed, in his low, incisive voice. "The charge is a serious one, being that of attempted poisoning."

She turned upon him fiercely, but his eyes met hers without quailing.

"Who is this man, and what brings him here?" she said, ignoring his remark entirely, and addressing herself to Lascelles. Nevertheless, it was Osborne himself who replied to the query.

"I am a detective, and I had the honour of your acquaintance in the servants' hall at Chesham Royal, when you were supposed to be Mrs. Chesham's lady's maid. It is not necessary for me to tell you in what way I discovered your secret, but I hold a warrant for your arrest on the charge of trying to poison Captain Basil Chesham."

She looked slowly from one to the other of the three men, as if she would gather from their faces some clue as to her conduct. But her search was in vain.

"Does this man speak the truth?" she asked, at length; "I mean, is the warrant really in his possession, or is this merely a trick to frighten me?"

"It is no trick," responded Basil, sternly, "and your own conscience will tell you whether the charge is a true one."

"True!" she repeated, stiffly, "of course it isn't true. Why should I want to poison you? Your death would benefit me nothing. This is merely a trumped-up story, fabricated for some purpose of your own. I do not even believe in the existence of the warrant."

"Show it to Mrs. Daore," said Captain Chesham, briefly, and Osborne obeyed. The warrant was properly made out, and signed, and there could be no doubt of its genuineness.

Lascelles made a sign to the detective, whereupon the latter withdrew into the passage, closing the sitting room door after him, and thus leaving the two gentlemen alone with Mrs. Daore, who was now standing near the fireplace with one arm resting on the mantel-piece, probably for support. She was very pale, and there was a keen, watchful, alert look about her eyes, like that of some fierce animal, who gathers up all her forces before she springs on her victim.

And yet, after all, it was she who spoke first.

"You have sent that man out of the room because you have some proposal to make to me," she said in her hard, scornful, metallic voice. "Am I not right?"

"Yes," responded Lascelles, "so far you are right. I have consulted with Captain Chesham, and for the sake of his wife, he is anxious there should be no more scandal concerning her family, therefore we have decided to give you one chance of escaping from the fate that you so richly deserve."

"And your conditions?"

"They are twofold. In the first place we require a full signed confession of your guilt—which shall not be used against you if you conform to our second condition; and that is that you leave England, and never return."

She listened quietly, as if weighing the words well before she replied to them. Then she said, calmly,—

"You are taking too much for granted, and so your conditions are ridiculous. I am innocent of the crime of which you accuse me, and I do not fear a public investigation, for I am quite sure you have no proofs of my guilt."

"Ah!" said Lascelles, in a comprehensive tone, "you want to find out what proofs we hold against you. Well, I will tell you. In the first place, we have in our possession a certain little sandal-wood box, containing various phials, all of them holding poisons. One of these phials is half empty, and on a paper is written in your hand-writing, but in the Hindustani language, certain dates on which you administered so many drops of this drug to some person who is not mentioned, but whose identity may easily be guessed. It so happens that the last of these doses Captain Chesham did not drink, and it was analysed by a doctor well versed in Indian poisons. This doctor will swear that it is the same liquid as that contained in your half empty phial. Jarvis, Captain Chesham's valet, will

also testify that he saw you in his master's room, on the last occasion but one on which you poured the drops into the glass of lemonade which was placed at your victim's bedside every night. I think that, taken with other circumstances in your past history, will be sufficient to convict you."

This was a bold move on the part of Lascelles, and it did not fail in its effect. When she heard the sandal-wood box mentioned, a change came over the woman's demeanour—her expression grew anxious, and the lines about her mouth more strained. She had not yet discovered the loss of the medicine chest, and she was quite aware what damning evidence its contents would be against her.

Then, too, the positive way in which Lascelles spoke of Jarvis having seen her—although in this instance the speaker drew a little on his imagination—startled her into a vivid sense of her danger.

"If that were not enough," put in Basil, observant of the effect Lascelles had produced, and rendered bolder by it, "I also have another charge to make against you, and it has to do with the mysterious death of my wife's father, of whose household you were an inmate."

She grew even paler than before.

"It is false!" she muttered.

"No, it is true; and as a proof of its truth, let me recall to your mind a certain scene at the White House last night—a scene wherein you played a principal part, and of which, unknown to you, I was a witness," said the young man. "You forced me, Mr. Vereshoyte, his approaching death, and he believed the prophecy would prove correct—as, in effect, it did. He believed in occultism; I do not. Your certainty that he would die is strongly presumptive evidence that you were instrumental in killing him."

The woman flung out her hands with a gesture of impotent resignation.

"It is useless to strive against Fate. I throw up the cards. I have striven hard to win, but all through the odds have been frightfully against me. I accept your terms. Promise me that no action shall be taken against me, and I will confess everything."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A LAST ATTEMPT.

ADELA DAORE turned her dark haggard eyes on Lascelles, with sullen hatred smouldering in their depths—in strange contrast to her submissive manner.

"What do you want me to say?" she demanded. "Or what does Captain Chesham require?"

"The truth. First of all, where is Dolores?"

"She is safe," a strange gleam shot into her eyes. "I will tell you her whereabouts by-and-by."

But even as she spoke she was thinking out in her subtle brain a scheme which should avenge all the evil that these two men had wrought upon her, and should leave her triumphant at the last.

She could not arrange all its details satisfactorily without some little meditation, but while she was talking they would be sure to take shape, and thus every minute gained would be of some help to her.

Little did either Lascelles or Basil think that her humble submission was only a cloak, beneath which was brooding a devilish plan that would shatter their hopes for ever.

"Then you acknowledge that you are the same woman whom I saw on the midnight of my arrival at the White House, with Mr. Vereshoyte?" said Basil.

"Yes," she returned, recklessly, "I acknowledge it. I had been an inmate of the household ever since the Vereshoytes went there, and I was known as the Hindoo servant, Abdul. I remained there on account of Dolores, and one day I saw a letter directed

to my supposed master in your handwriting," addressing herself to Lascelles; "I signed it, and found that you had escaped from Siberia—whether I had been instrumental in sending you," she smiled triumphantly. "You asked for money to enable you to return to England; but, as that was the last thing I wished to happen, I simply burnt the letter, and Verschoyle—as he called himself—never saw it. I knew that if you returned you would betray to your brother the secret of Dolores' birth. You see I made a mistake in my calculations, and after all I might have spared myself my pains. But that I did not know, and if you had come home and told your brother that Dolores was not his daughter, but mine, he would have cast us both off."

"He had never made a will, therefore I believed you to be the legal heir to all his riches, and it would not have fallen in with my plans at all that you should inherit his wealth. So I foretold his death, and he, having great faith in my powers of second sight, believed me, and made his preparations accordingly. I had imagined these preparations would have taken the shape of making a will, leaving everything he possessed to Dolores, and I suggested this to him, but instead of doing so he tried to provide for Dolores' future by marrying her to Captain Chesham."

As she mentioned his name she shot one quick glance at Basil, and the young man actually recoiled at the basilisk venom of her eyes.

"Well!" said Lascelles, "go on."

"I would have prevented the marriage if I could," proceeded Adela Dacre, still in the same, dull, mechanical voice in which she had before spoken, "but it was beyond my power to do so. So the wedding took place, and then the settlements were signed by which all her supposed father's wealth was left to Dolores. Then I saw my path clear—if only I could get rid of Verschoyle, and Captain Chesham, no one could touch Dolores' wealth, and she and I would be able to live happily together on it. At this juncture my knowledge of Indian drugs helped me, and while Mr. Verschoyle and his son-in-law were talking together in the study I was in hiding behind the curtain. I had already matured my plans, and, as a result, the room was filled with vapour produced by the fusing together of two liquids, whose properties were known to me although they are unknown to most Europeans. These vapours were poisonous, and no human being could have inhaled them for sixty seconds without falling into a stupor, which would end in death if the person affected were allowed to remain in the tainted air for ten minutes."

"Then!" exclaimed Basil, in a burst of horror, "you had doomed my death too!"

She shrugged her shoulders, slightly.

"You see," she said, placidly, "in India, where all my early youth was spent, we don't think as much of human life as you Western people do. One man more or less in the world—what does it matter?"

Both her hearers shuddered at this revolting cynicism, and she seemed actually amused at their horror. It was quite true that her Eastern education had taught her to regard human life as a very small matter, if it stood in the way of any end she had set herself to attain. As he looked at her, Basil was seized with a strange panic of fear on Dolores' account. Not that he thought Dolores was really in the house, for the woman's manner had quite deceived him, and he imagined that after bringing her here, she had sent the young girl away, so as to be beyond reach of pursuit. Nevertheless, with such a wretch as this to deal with, it was impossible to be sure of his wife's safety.

"I must know where my wife is," he said, turning to Lascelles, with profound agitation. "The more I hear of the crimes in which this woman has steeped her soul, the greater is my anxiety as to Dolores' whereabouts."

Adela Dacre looked at him curiously.

"You are showing a great deal of feeling on behalf of the bride for whom you never cared," she observed.

"Never cared!" he repeated with a groan. "My Heaven! I love her better than life itself."

Again that strange fire came in the woman's eyes—a fire lit by some evil thought.

"Have you got a carriage here?" she asked abruptly.

"Yes. We drove down from town."

"Very well, then. I will take you to Dolores. She is not more than a mile away. But first of all I must go upstairs and put my cloak on. You will accord me that permission?" turning from one to the other with her mocking smile.

They could not well refuse it; nevertheless, as she left the room, Basil said, uneasily,—

"She is brewing more mischief. I saw it in her face. Suppose Dolores is in this house after all!"

Lascelles did not reply. Truth to tell, he himself was ill at ease, for there had been in Adela Dacre's manner, as she went out, some subtle anticipation of triumph which boded no good.

"What can we do?" proceeded Basil, working himself into a fever of apprehension. "My own impression is we had better follow her upstairs. It is unsafe to let her out of our sight if there is any possibility of Dolores being in her power."

"Perhaps you are right," responded Lascelles. "Let us go upstairs."

The words had hardly left his lips before there rang through the house a loud, piercing shriek, a shriek of deadly terror. What it might portend they could only guess; but the hearts of both men seemed for a moment to stop beating in the awful fear that came upon them.

"It is Dolores!" cried Basil, and in another second both he and Lascelles were rushing up the stairs, followed by Osborne.

At the top of the landing three doors confronted them, all shut. From behind which of those three had the terrible cry come?

Some instinct seemed to guide Basil, for, without hesitation he went to the farthest one, and turned the handle. As he might have anticipated, it was locked, but this small matter was not allowed to stand in his way, for he flung himself against the wood work with all his force.

Alas! his strength was not what it had been before his fitness; and his onslaught seemed to make no perceptible impression on the heavy oak door.

"Come and help me!" he exclaimed, and the other two at once obeyed.

Their united strength was considerable; and was not exercised in vain. The lock gave way and the door flew open, disclosing a sight within that well-nigh paralysed them.

Dolores was lying on a couch, her eyes half closed, her cheeks perfectly pallid. From one arm the sleeve had been rolled back, and a puncture showed like a blood red spot on the white skin.

Adela Dacre stood at the head of the couch looking at her victim—love, hatred, triumph all expressed in her face. She turned swiftly on the intruders, and broke into a low laugh.

"You have not conquered me yet, you see!" she exclaimed, her eyes flashing with their old fire. "You thought I would submit meekly to your terms, and let you wreak your will on me, while I yielded you an unqualified submission. You were wrong. I will yield to fate because I must, never to man!"

Under any other conditions there might have been something to admire in the fiery independence of this proud spirit, which would break but never bend. Adela Dacre ought to have lived in another age. She would have made a Samarkand or a Baidoea, and under other auspices her untamable soul and splendid energies might have carved out a grand destiny for her, instead of dragging her

in the mire of jealousy and crime and sordid avarice, which had proved her ruin.

"Great heavens! what have you done?" cried Basil, kneeling by his wife's side, and looking down into the sweet wan face with an agony of dread in his eyes.

"I will tell you what I have done. I have killed her!"

At this moment Dolores opened her eyes, and looked round bewilderedly. But she was too faint to express surprise; indeed, in her present condition of utter prostration it is a question whether she felt any.

"Go, run for a doctor!" cried Basil, wildly incoherent. "Even yet we may save her."

It was Osborne who left the room to obey. Lascelles, meanwhile, drew near the couch and lifted the young girl's arm, while he examined the wound—the merest pin-prick—that marred its snowy whiteness.

"All the doctors in London will not be able to save her," said Adela Dacre, deliberately. "I do not bungle matters like that. The wound is poisoned; and she will die before a doctor can arrive. When he comes," she added, and she held up her own arm, on which was visible a similar mark, "he can try his skill on me if he likes, but I prophesy it will be of no avail."

A very stupor of dread was upon Basil. Must he indeed lose this fair young wife of his just in the moment of reunion? Oh, Heaven would surely never be so cruel!

Suddenly there flashed upon him the recollection of a remark made by someone at the inquest held on Sigismund Verschoyle—who, as the reader will remember, was supposed to have died from the injection of some poison into the veins.

"If," said the person, "there had been someone by at the time the wound was inflicted, who had had the presence of mind to suck the poison out, the victim might have been saved."

It was a forlorn hope, but drowning men will even cling to straw in their last extremity and Basil felt like a drowning man.

At any rate, even if Dolores died, he would have the poor satisfaction of having risked his own life in order to save her!

And so, kneeling there at her side, he lifted the beautiful white arm to his lips, and essayed this last desperate remedy.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

AND LAST.

AFTERWARDS Dolores had a very dim notion of what had happened to her. She had a vague idea of being carried downstairs and put in a carriage where she was wrapped up in rugs and furs, then of being rapidly driven along dark roads, and finally of finding herself in a comfortable spacious, fire-lit room, with no less a person than Beatrice Risdon bending over her.

"Where am I?" she asked faintly, and Beatrice, half-languishing, half-crying, answered the question.

"You are at the Grand Hotel, and here you are going to remain, and I am going to nurse you."

"But what brings you here, Beatrice?"

"Never mind that just now. There will be heaps of time for me to answer your questions by-and-by, but what you have to do at the present moment is to go to sleep, and believe that at last you are safe and in good hands."

She raised the young girl slightly from the pillows, and gave her a medicated draught, and after that Dolores soon sank to sleep, while Miss Risdon remained by her bedside, watching her all through the night. There was no strict necessity for her to deprive herself of her own rest, but it pleased Beatrice to do so, and that in spite of her aunt's remonstrances.

All the next day Dolores was kept very quiet indeed. She was not physically ill, but

her nerves had sustained a very severe shock, which she might not readily get over, and the doctor who had been called in insisted on perfect rest for mind and body.

At intervals "Aunt Anne" came in to see how she was progressing, but Beatrice was head nurse, and she jealously resented any intrusion on her own domain. Outside the door, she held whispered colloquies with Captain Chesham, who chafed bitterly at being excluded from the sick chamber.

After one of these mysterious conversations, Beatrice came back to find Dolores with two scarlet spots of colour on her cheeks.

"Whom were you talking to?" she asked, and Beatrice answered, meekly,—

"To your husband, my dear."

"I thought so!" Dolores murmured, below her breath. Then she added: "What is he doing here?"

"Waiting for you to get better. He was anxious to come in and see you, but the doctor thought it best to put off your meeting for a day or two. Oh, Dolores!" with a sudden burst of very characteristic enthusiasm, "what a splendid fellow he is after all! I'm awfully sorry I ever breathed a word against him, but I had no idea he was such a hero."

"Why is he a hero?" asked Dolores, averting her eyes, and playing nervously with some flowers she held in her hands.

"Can you ask? Is it possible you don't know?"

"Don't know what?"

"Why, that he saved your life, and risked his own in doing it."

"No," said Dolores, bewilderedly, "I didn't know it."

"Then it is time you did!" warmly exclaimed Miss Risdon, who from the depths of anger and contempt for Basil had suddenly shot up to the heights of profound admiration. "Perhaps, though, I oughtn't to tell you just yet."

As usual, Beatrice spoke first, and thought afterwards.

"Oh, yes, you ought!" exclaimed Dolores. "It will do me a great deal more harm to be kept in suspense."

"Well, that's exactly my idea. Don't you know that that horrible woman—poor thing! she's dead now, so we won't say anything more against her than we can help—Travice, I mean, tried to murder you by a poisoned ailette, or something of that sort? And Captain Chesham snatched the poison out, like that dear old Queen Philippa in English History. He must love you very dearly, Dolores, to do such a thing."

Dolores made no reply, quick tears were coursing their way down her cheeks, and her little thin hands trembled as they lay upon her breast. She could not understand it all even yet, but Beatrice's tale left so much clear. Basil had been prepared to sacrifice his own life for the chance of snatching her from death.

Oh! it was grand of him, it was noble, it was worthy of himself.

Her heart beat in a delightful rapture, then stood still with a sudden reaction. She could not believe that his action was prompted by the feeling to which Beatrice attributed it. No; he had done it from a strong sense of the claims humanity had upon him, not from any tenderness to the creature whom he saved. How, indeed, could she expect him to cherish tenderness towards the woman who he believed had tried to take his own life?

She shivered as she lay under the soft elder down, and turned her face to the wall so that Beatrice should not see it. That young lady passed for a few minutes beside the bed, waiting for some sort of comment—some acknowledgment on the wife's part of the debt she owed her husband. But none came, and at last she turned away in bitter disappointment.

Dolores lay very still, watching the firelight playing in ruddy shadows on the wall, and listening to the traffic that made a continuous hum outside. The last few weeks with their

manifold incidents, their horror, their excitement, passed through her brain like the figures of a phantasmagoria, but all were more or less vague and indistinct. She could not disentangle them, but she was haunted by a strange, half maddening fear that her own part was not yet played in the tragedy—that once more she would have to make plans for leaving Basil and seeking her own fortune out in the cruel world.

At any cost she must give him his freedom—the obligation to do so was tenfold stronger since his act of heroism than it had been before!

And yet, how terrible to leave him still under the impression that she had tried to murder him! Oh, if she could only convince him of his mistake; if she could only assure him of the innocence of her intention, even though the result of the philtre had been so deadly!

But he would not believe her. Had he not said that an angel from Heaven would be powerless to clear her in his sight? As she remembered his stern voice and manner when he gave her this ultimatum a little despairing cry escaped her lips, and at the sound of it Beatrice sprang up from her chair near the window and came over to the patient, her face full of alarm.

"What is the matter, Dolores—are you worse?"

Dolores shook her head with a wan smile. She could not speak, for the tears well-nigh choked her.

Beatrice remained looking at her for a moment with gravely knitted brows, then she made a movement of decision.

"This won't do, you know, Dolores. You are exciting yourself, and that is what the doctor especially warned us to guard against. I must send for him at once."

She was proceeding towards the bell, when the young wife reached out one small white hand, and clutched frantically at her dress.

"Don't—Beatrice—don't! All the doctors in the world can't do me any good." She caught her breath with a little gasp. "I shall be better presently—perhaps."

The last word was added in a very low tone, but Miss Risdon's quick ear caught it all the same. She bent down and looked searchingly into the young girl's eyes.

"Dolores!" she exclaimed, impressively, "you have still something on your mind—I am sure of it. My dear, take me into your confidence and let me see if I can help you. I would do my best anyhow."

"I am sure you would, Beatrice. But—but"—her voice faltering—"it is beyond your power to help me. I think," wearily, "the worst of a trouble such as mine is that it must be borne alone—that it is impossible to share it with someone else."

"You mean you won't confide in me?"

"I mean I cannot."

Beatrice went back to her former position, but she did not take up the work on which she had been employed, neither did she look through the window at the hurrying crowds that jostled each other on the pavement below. She was thinking out the situation. Clearly Dolores had a secret, and equally clearly she would never get well while it was preying on her mind. Could it be that she was dwelling on her husband's former infatuation for Miss Stanhope—an infatuation that Beatrice, judging from what she had seen of Captain Chesham lately, opined to be as dead as the proverbial door-nail?

The young girl at last came to the conclusion that this must be so, and if her surmise were correct, then only Basil himself could reassure his wife on such a point.

Should she ask him to do so? Beatrice wavered. It was a delicate position to be placed in, and she was not quite sure whether her interference would be justifiable. One glance at the poor little tired face on the pillow decided her. After all, why should she let mere conventional scruples stand in her

way, when Dolores' happiness—perhaps her life—might be at stake?

Once more she came to the bedside, and smoothed the soft hair lying on the patient's brow, and bent down to kiss the pretty lips.

"I am going to leave you for a few minutes, Dolores. Shall I send Aunt Anne to you, or would you rather be left alone?"

"I would rather be left alone, please."

"Very well, dear. You can ring the bell beside you if you want anything."

A few minutes later Beatrice stood opposite to Captain Chesham, a very real embarrassment in her flushing face and nervous manner—an embarrassment that alarmed Basil, for he knew her to be as a rule the most self-possessed of girls, and he at once jumped to the conclusion that there must be something wrong with Dolores.

"My wife is worse!" he exclaimed, without giving her time to speak.

"Yes," she answered, "I think she is; but at the same time I don't fancy it is her physical condition so much as her mental state that has given her this relapse. The fact is, Captain Chesham, she is worrying over something, and until that worry is removed there isn't much chance of her getting well."

Basil's face changed. He pulled hard at his moustache, and Beatrice fancied his hand was not quite steady.

"Do you know the root of this worry of hers?" he asked; and, in answering, she carefully kept her eyes averted from him.

"I don't know it, for, although I begged for her confidence, she would not give it me. But," growing still redder, "I have an idea of what it may be."

"And your idea?"

All at once her eyes met his—steadily and firmly.

"I will tell it to you, Captain Chesham; but, first of all, you must promise not to be offended with me, and to believe that I am acting solely with a view to Dolores' happiness."

He took her hand, and pressed it between both his own.

"You need not tell me that, Miss Risdon; actions are more convincing than words, and you have already proved the stuff your friendship is made of."

"Thank you. I am very fond of Dolores, and it goes to my heart to see her distressed. Well, then, I think she has a notion that you don't care for her. She has heard of your former engagement to Miss Stanhope, and—"

Here Beatrice broke down, floundering rather lamely in a search for suitable words with which to clothe her communication.

But Basil came to her rescue in a quite unexpected manner.

"I understand," he said, quietly. He went to the window, and stared out in an unseeing fashion for a few minutes, during which he pondered gravely. Then he came back to Beatrice. "The doctor said I had better not see my wife until she was convalescent," he went on; "but doctors are not infallible, they can't possibly take into consideration all the circumstances that may arise in any given case; and it seems to me that in the present instance you know a good deal better than any doctor what should be done. Would you advise me to see Dolores at once?"

The answer came without hesitation.

"Certainly, if you can by seeing her set her mind at rest."

Thus it came about that when Dolores, conscious of another presence in the room, opened her eyes with the expectation of seeing Beatrice, she encountered the gaze—not of her young nurse, but of her husband.

"Basil!" she murmured, under her breath, hardly certain whether she was not still under the influence of a waking dream.

"Yes, darling, it is I."

Had she heard aright? What did it mean, that loving tone, that endearing epithet,

those tender eyes gazing, ah! so sweetly, down into her own?

Her breath came and went quickly, a stain of scarlet flamed in her cheeks. She pressed her hand against her brow, but Basil gently took possession of the small white fingers, and raised them to his lips, while he bent a little nearer to her.

"I am here against the doctor's orders," he told her, "but Miss Risdon said you were growing a little restless, and I thought perhaps I might soothe you, as I used to in the old days at Lugano, when you had headaches. Do you remember?"

Did she not? She gave a half-sobbing gasp of utter regret.

"Ah, those days!" she exclaimed, almost unconsciously. "They seem so long ago, so dreadfully far off!"

"And yet they are not in reality far off," he answered, very gently, "and in the future, Dolores, we will repeat them, only they shall be a thousandfold happier than those of our honeymoon ever were."

She looked up at him with a bewildered and intensely pathetic entreaty in her eyes.

"Ah, I do not understand!" she cried out, wildly. "Why do you speak to me in these tones, why do you look at me with those eyes? Is it that you think I am going to die, and so you have forgiven me?"

"Heaven forbid! No, Dolores, you are not going to die; you are going to live, you are going to be happy, as you were never happy before—that is," he added, humbly, "if the undivided love of my heart, if all the devotion of my life, can give you happiness. I have only one prayer, one desire now, and it is that Heaven will let me alone to you for all the wrong that has been done."

She snatched her hands from his, and sat upright, looking at him. The little frills round her throat rose and fell with the swift, excited beating of her heart, and yet a strange, glad hope had sprung up within her—so strange, so glad, that she could only dimly realize it.

"Is it true, Basil, or am I only deceiving myself, as I have deceived myself a hundred times in my dreams? Do you believe now that I had no intention of harming you when I gave you the draught—that I—?" She stopped suddenly, shivering convulsively.

"My darling, I know you had no intention of harming me. What you gave me was innocent enough—pure water in all likelihood. The poison in the lemonade was not put there by your hand, but by the hand of the wretched woman whose crimes have wrought so much misery. Oh, Dolores! when I think of the cruel thoughts I had of you—the cruel things I said to you at Chesham Royal, on that miserable afternoon before you left, I feel as if I dare not even ask you to forgive me!"

His handsome head dropped lower and lower, in utter self-abasement, and gradually the bewilderment faded out of Dolores' eyes, and was replaced by the eager light of comprehension.

She reached out one trembling hand, and let it rest hesitatingly on his chestnut curls. As he felt the light touch, Basil looked up quickly.

"Will you forgive me, Dolores?"

"I have nothing to forgive," faltering.

"Yes, you have!" he exclaimed, energetically. "But, Heaven willing, I will redeem the past, and then perhaps my endeavour will be crowned with the fruition of the hope whose fulfilment means for me the very height of human happiness. Sweetest! I love you with the love of lover and husband, both in one—a love before which all the fancies of my youth, yes, even that one for Eulalie Stanhope, which was real enough until she killed it, fade into nothingness. In the days to come, will my love compel a return?"

He was drawing backward now, not daring in his great humility to touch her; even while his eyes glowed with all the tenderness and ardour of a lover's passion, Dolores

trembled excessively. A moment more, and she held out her hands with a low cry,—

"My love, my love!"

He looked at her for a second, then he understood, and for the first time in her life the young wife felt upon her lips a lover's kisses.

Verily, Beatrice had done wisely in defying the doctor, and taking the law into her own hands—a fact of which she was keenly conscious when she came in half an hour afterwards, and found Basil sitting by his bride's side, while on both their faces shone the serene light of a new-found happiness.

And happiness is a most marvellous physician, performing cures such as Æschylus himself never even dreamt of. Under its influence Dolores soon became her own bright radiant self; but for various reasons Basil thought it best to take her away from England for a time, so they spent the winter on the shores of the blue Mediterranean, and only returned to their native land when the May flowers were blossoming in field and hedgerow, and the gladness of spring was in the air.

They had come back in time for Beatrice Risdon's wedding—a very grand affair, achieved to the accompaniment of evergreen arches and flower-strewn pathway, followed by great holiday-keeping on the part of the villagers, who had known and loved the bride since her childhood.

Very pretty looked Beatrice in her trailing satin robes, and her diadem of orange blossoms; and very proud looked Darcy Munroe as he led her from the altar, in between the rows of smiling faces. Behind followed his father with "Aunt Anne," and bringing up the rear was the Creole young lady, once destined by Munroe senior for his son's bride, and called by Beatrice "that blackamoor."

"That blackamoor," however, had turned out a very amiable personage, and Beatrice had quite forgiven her all her fancied wrongs—in token of which she had asked her to officiate as bridesmaid at her wedding!

But fairer than bridesmaid or bride—more radiant in her youthful joyousness and perfect happiness—was Dolores Chesham. People turned to look at her as she passed by, leaning on her husband's arm, and more than one whispered,—

"What a perfect pair!"

And so, indeed, they were—perfect in the love that flooded their life with its glad plenitude; perfect in that trust that nothing could ever break; perfect with such supreme faith as it is given to few to obtain. Their love had been subjected to the "cleansing fires" of tribulation, and like gold it had come forth, purified from all dross.

Eulalie Stanhope, it is hardly necessary to say, was not at Beatrice Risdon's wedding. In point of fact she was at that particular time much occupied in preparations for her own marriage with a gay old duke of seventy-five, who had been captivated by her beauty, and who thought she would make an ideal duchess. Let us hope the future will not undeceive him!

Lavocler—who by this time had recovered his fortune—bought Priors Abbey, and settled down there with his books and his art studies, having made arrangements that the Cheshams should consider the house as their home, and come there whenever they felt inclined.

Dolores prophesies that in course of time he will marry; but whether her prophecy will come true remains to be proved.

And so we bid them farewell, girl round as they are by the sunshine of happiness, in whose brightness the sorrows of the past have all vanished, while the future is spanned by the rainbow of hope.

[THE END.]

PHYSICIANS' carriages have the right of way in the streets of Berlin.

WRITTEN IN SAND.

CHAPTER IV.

On the following day, after luncheon, Mrs. Gander Colin summoned Liora to her presence. She sat on a large arm-chair, leaving her governess to stand.

"I understand," she began, "that you met Mr. Hampden again this morning, when you were out with my daughters?"

"Yes, we met him," replied Liora.

"It is unnecessary to include my daughters in the assignation," said Mrs. Colin, tartly.

"The assignation?" queried Liora.

"Yes, you met him by appointment."

"By appointment—I? Certainly not. It was quite by accident that—"

"That he knew the time and place of your walk?" interrupted Mrs. Colin with a malicious smile. "Oh, very likely," and the smile gave place to a laugh of mockery.

"But, indeed, I—!" Liora was about to protest.

"That is enough, Miss D'Arcy. I don't wish to enter into the particulars of a governess's intrigues. The main fact is this—that you met Mr. Hampden to day for the third time."

"That is the case certainly." The governess's whole attitude breathed defiance.

"Of course it is the case. My daughters are truthful."

The covert insinuation of falsehood on Liora's part was not lost on the girl, and she grew red with the indignation she could hardly help herself from expressing.

"I wish you to understand distinctly," pursued Mrs. Colin, "that this must end."

"I cannot put an end to what I have no share in," was the reply, spoken with head erect and straight gazing eyes. "I suppose one person has as good a right to walk in Regent's Park as another."

"I suppose too," said Mrs. Colin, stung into anger by the very coolness of her victim, "that I have a right to choose in what company my daughters shall be when they are out walking. I do not choose that they shall be in the company of every man with whom their governess chooses to carry on a flirtation. And I was to be made the dupes of this intrigue? I was to sit through an idiotic pantomime that you and your admirer might have the opportunity of meeting. Luckily, I didn't fall into the trap, but I have no doubt that the lost opportunity was made up for this morning."

"I have assured you that the meetings with Mr. Hampden were not by appointment, and you did not believe me. I now assure you that there is no question of either flirtation or intrigue—I think those were the words you applied to such slight acquaintance as I have with Mr. Hampden. Will you disbelieve this also?"

"I disbelieve it wholly."

"Then I must cease to remain in the employ of anyone who doubts my word. Whilst I remain in the house, I must beg to be excused for walking out with your daughters."

"Certainly, having heard of your conduct. I did not intend that their young minds should be poisoned by your example—they shall go out with my maid."

"So that is settled!" thought Liora, when she had reached the sanctuary of her own room. "I am glad of it—very glad of it. I could not have borne it much longer—not even for Charlie's sake. How I wish Charlie hadn't been clever, then we could have all lived together and been happy. I wonder what I'll do now. I won't—no I won't—be a governess again. Thank goodness, Charlie's fees are all paid for this term, and we have put by enough, mother and I, to last him till September. By that time something will have turned up for me. I must find an occupation that Jack couldn't look down upon;" and then the girl

fell to musing on the absent lover to whom she had sworn to be loyal, and somehow she found herself comparing him with Henry Hampden, greatly to the disadvantage of the latter, though wherein was the disadvantage, she could not precisely tell.

He was older—Hampden that is—nearly twice as old as Jack Lancelot. Of course, there was no harm in age, none at all. Then he was not handsome, like Jack, and yet, though Jack's features were imprinted on her heart, she could not recall Jack's expression, whilst she could not let her thoughts rest on Mr. Hampden without remembering the kindness that shone in his eyes.

He had blue eyes and he was fair. She had never admired fair men so much as dark men.

Jack was dark, and Hampden had a beard which gave him a look of sedateness, which she never associated with a lover. A lover? Why should the word "lover" occur to her in connection with Hampden?

Jack Lancelot was her lover, and it was sacrilege for this man to intrude on her thoughts even. Till then, indeed, she had not recognised that he had intruded a good deal during the past week. Since the evening he had shown her so distinctly that to him she was a human being, and not a mere paid piece of utility. But she had never recognised his admiration till Mrs. Collin herself pointed out the true state of the case, for that it was the true state of the case her woman's instinct would no longer permit her to deny.

Once a woman recognises that she exercises more or less fascination on a man, that man is interesting to her beyond his fellows, even though her conquest may have been wholly involuntary. She may herself be equally indifferent to an Adonis and a cyclop, but if once she realises that the cyclop is not indifferent to her he will attain to a more prominent position in her thoughts than the Adonis.

Putting Jack Lancelot out of the question altogether this Mr. Hampden, who was after all little more than a stranger to her, had on a sudden become a more important character in the drama of Liora D'Arcy's thoughts than any other man who had his part on that infinite stage of a woman's memory. She had known in the days when her life was not a mere possibility of earning money, men, who were perhaps vastly better looking or vastly more agreeable than this Hampden, and yet they had all taken their places amongst the crowd of supers as those are called who are as unnecessary to the working of the drama as they are inevitable.

He, however, had stepped to a place where the footlights of memory shone full on him, where his every word was audible, where his every action had a significance that could not be lost sight of; and, in the background, another figure played a part—a mere silent part, and to Liora's eyes this figure was the central one on her stage, for it was set about with a halo of golden love that cast an unearthly blinding glitter, and made all other figures appear as in shadow. Liora resented it when Henry Hampden suddenly stepped in front of this radiant vision, intercepting her view somewhat, and willy nilly forcing her attention.

"No, I could never love him as I love Jack!" was her unspoken answer to his presumption; and then she was angry with herself for admitting even an impossibility.

CHAPTER V.

It was a broiling day in August—a day to make one curse the fate that bound one to the smothering air of London streets, that allowed the weary eyes nothing to rest upon but endless "brickscape," dingy and dusty, instead of the fresh green of fields and trees.

The parks only mocked one with their begrimed trees, that were as still in the breezeless air as if they had been artificial, wired things. The grass looked like its

counterfeit, as it is often seen in a so-called rural scene on the stage; the ornamental waters were still as glass, and they were certainly blood heat.

Those who took an interest in a hot day from a scientific standpoint were gratified to see their thermometers rise to eighty-eight in the shade.

Most people were out of town, and those who were not had drawn down their sun-blinds, so that the streets looked rather as if they were inhabited by the dead than by the living.

So thought the solitary individual who was visible on the long road running between two rows of small houses known as Kensington-villas. And yet that individual found himself there from choice, not from necessity.

Kensington-villas are old-fashioned little houses, each one having in front its little bit of supposed garden, about ten feet square, in which three or four lime trees try to grow, and in which the supposed gravel path is ornamented with the iron lifts of the coal-shoots. A flight of steps leads up to the hall door, and the fence of the houses are further enhanced by bay windows.

They are not houses for which, being "fitted with every modern convenience," a fancy price is asked; they have no modern conveniences, and the rents are low in consequence—low, comparatively speaking.

Nevertheless, Kensington-villas are eminently respectable, and it was the exception if one of them displayed the intimation that apartments were to let.

No. 2 was one of the exceptions, and, seeing the card over the door, the pedestrian, who happened to be looking for No. 2 felt apprehensive lest his quest should be vain.

"She isn't here now, most likely. This was her address four months ago. Perhaps they will know where she is," he thought, and he ran up the steps and gave a brisk double knock.

A double knock, much less a brisk one, being a rarity on such a day, when all the world was half asleep, more than one neighbouring blind was drawn aside, that the person who had energy to give such a knock might be inspected.

"It's never a lodger, surely!" exclaimed the mistress of a house opposite, the faint light of which was also ornamented with a card bearing the word "Apartments." "A lodger in August! Looks the right sort too. 'E's talkin' to Mrs. D'Arcy. My t' 'e's goin' in. A lodger, I declare!"

But this female Peeping Tom was astray for once. The gentleman had not inquired for rooms, but for Miss D'Arcy.

"She's out just now," replied Mrs. D'Arcy, who had herself opened the door; during the slack time she dispensed with that necessary nuisance, the slavery.

"I don't think she will be long, if—oh! are you come about her book?" added Mrs. D'Arcy, suddenly.

The gentleman looked puzzled.

"N-no. There is my card. Perhaps I have the pleasure of speaking to a friend of Miss D'Arcy's—a relative?"

He saw at once, in spite of her somewhat rusty black dress, that he spoke to a lady, and her slight Irish brogue had suggested the chance of relationship with Liora.

"I am her mother," was the reply.

"May I then claim acquaintance? I met Miss D'Arcy at Mrs. Gander Collin's."

"Mr. Hampden—Hampden," mused Mrs. D'Arcy, looking at the card and trying to recall the name. No, Liora had never spoken of a Mr. Hampden. "Well," she said, looking up, "come in, anyway; I'm sure Liora won't be long. It's too hot to stay out. She's only gone to get some paper for her stories."

"Stories?" he asked, puzzled again.

"Yes, she writes. She has written a novel."

"A novel? Which? What is its name? Tell me, that I may get it."

"But it isn't published yet. She hasn't even heard from the publishers if they'll take

it. But of course they will, it's so clever. She is in high glee about it herself. We are wondering what she'll get for it. How much do you think?"

"I haven't an idea. Is it a three-volume novel?"

"Yes. She says she'll get about a hundred pounds for it. That will be better than being a governess. A hundred for three months' work. She was three months writing it—sat up half the night. She has been fit for nothing ever since, and the suspense of waiting to hear how much they'll give is wearing her out. It is too bad of them to be so long in answering."

"And what is it called, this book?" asked Hampden.

"Written in Sand. I think she ought to choose a more startling title. They say the title's everything."

"It is Miss D'Arcy's first novel?"

"Yes. It is wonderful, considering she never wrote a line in her life before. Her father wasn't literary either. He was clever enough—and yet he wasn't clever."

This last remark she made as if to herself.

"Not clever enough for the rogues there are," Mr. Hampden said, reading her meaning.

"Did you—do you know about—about—"

"I know how greatly he was wronged, Mrs. D'Arcy."

"I am glad a few people believe in the truth, that we have still some friends left."

"I am sure you will always have many friends, you and Miss D'Arcy," he replied.

"No, Mr. Hampden. The poor have not many friends. Some day we shall be rich, perhaps, and then we can do without friends, fair-weather friends. I dare say people will want to be civil to us when Liora has made a great name. Charlie, too, he ought to do something in the world; and she poured out the story of the scholarship, and how Liora and she worked that he might reap the benefit of it.

"But this book will make things easier," she concluded. "If she gets a hundred that will bridge over more than a year; and one novel always means another to follow, of course."

"And if she does not get it?" put in Hampden, by way of hinting that it was better not to be too sanguine lest disappointment should follow.

"Well, if she gets even fifty it will be more than she got at the Collins." That she might get nothing never entered hopeful Mrs. D'Arcy's head. "She says she won't take less than fifty. She has sent the book to first-rate publishers, Marham and Wallace, so she won't be cheated."

"How long is your son to remain at Oxford?"

"Now that Liora is likely to make money she says he is to stay till he gets his degree. He has been nearly two years in residence he will stay three years longer, I dare say."

Three years of toil for Liora!

At this moment the door of the sitting-room, in which they were, was opened, and by Liora.

She had let herself into the house with a latchkey, and the sitting-room being at the back, Mrs. D'Arcy and Hampden had not heard her approach.

Hampden sat by the wall behind the door, so that Liora did not perceive his presence. Whilst she was still on the threshold Mrs. D'Arcy, with the quick eye of a mother, saw by the pallor of the girl's face that something was amiss with her.

"I have been to Marham and Wallace's," she said in a dull, expressionless voice. "They have rejected my novel."

She had moved forward into the room and, with a wild sob, she flung the parcel of manuscript on the table, and, falling on her knees, she bowed her head upon the crimson table cover, and burst into a passion of weeping.

Mrs. D'Arcy looked towards Mr. Hampden, who was immediately behind the prostrate

girl, and was still quite unobserved by her. He placed a finger on his lips significantly, and, without a word, he slipped gently from the room and out of the house.

Mrs. D'Aray understood the action well enough, and her heart went out to him in motherly gratitude. He did not wish to add to Liora's humiliation by letting her know that he had been the witness of her despair.

A day or two later Charlie D'Aray, who began to be in a dread lest after all he must forego the benefit of his scholarship, was informed by the authorities that all his expenses for the ensuing term had been paid by an anonymous "friend."

CHAPTER VI.

HENRY HAMPDEN allowed nearly a week to elapse, before repeating his visit to Kensington villas, partly in order that Liora might in some measure have got over her disappointment, partly, too, that she might not be led by his appearance on the scene at the very time when her anxiety for her brother had been set at rest to associate him with Charlie's anonymous "friend." That Mrs. D'Aray would guess the truth was hardly probable; he was too much of a stranger to her to be much in her thoughts. He sincerely trusted that she would keep the circumstance of her previous visit to herself. That she had done so was fully apparent to him the moment he again saw Liora. She opened the door to him.

"Mr. Hampden!" she exclaimed in astonishment, and then something—the memory of Mrs. Collin's hints perhaps, now further proved to have been true, made her grow somewhat confused in manner; in spite of her own indifference, she felt the colour mount to her cheeks. She bade him come into the little back sitting-room, which the D'Arays appropriated to their own use, and by the time she had settled herself in a chair by the window she had quite regained her composure.

"And how in the world did you find us out?" she asked him, purposely making use of the word "us."

"The man at the Collins' told me your address. I did not know you had left them. I was glad to find it was so. Mrs. Collin did not impress me favourably. And I knew you were unhappy there—forgive me for speaking so plainly."

"I was unhappy; I was miserable."

"You must have left shortly after I saw you."

"Yes, almost immediately. It was on account of—"

Liora stopped suddenly and lowered her eyes. "I mean I was so miserable I could not stay."

But Mr. Hampden was not to be deceived. "Miss D'Aray," he said, "don't think I'm inquisitive, but had I anything to do with it? That night about the pantomime?"

"No, the pantomime had nothing to do with it. I could not have stood it much longer in any case."

"Miss D'Aray, I had something to do with your leaving. I am glad that this is the case. I did not like your being there."

Liora looked up a little defiant; this man was nothing to her, and he had no right to express any opinion upon her actions. She said nothing, however, and they dropped into personal topics. The subject of Liora's attempt at authorship was never touched upon; he did not inquire concerning her present occupation, nor did she mention the fact that she earned a few shillings now and then, not much more than covered the cost of the hire of the machine, by doing type-writing.

Mrs. D'Aray presently joined them, Liora, ignorant of their previous meeting, introducing Mr. Hampden formally to her mother. She did not notice the friendly glance expressive of mutual understanding that passed between them. Mrs. D'Aray referred

to Charlie, and then out came the story of the great piece of luck that had befallen him.

"We can't think who it is that sent it," put in Liora. "Some one who knew us long ago in Ireland—some old friend of papa's most likely." Clearly the truth had never dawned upon them.

After that, Henry Hampden found his way pretty often to the little house in Kensington villas, but he was obliged to own to himself that the more frequently he saw Liora the farther he seemed from discovering what were her feelings towards him. She was always pleasant and agreeable, but always she managed that conversation should embrace only generalities. She made him welcome when he came, with her natural Hibernian heartiness, but she never gave him the slightest encouragement to seek her society. He had hitherto thought her a woman whose every motive and inner feeling was easily recognisable; to this estimate he had arrived on that evening at the Collins' when first he made her acquaintance. Now he found his estimate wrong. She was as impenetrable as an sphynx.

"I cannot stand this doubt any longer; I will and it one way or the other," he told himself. "I will ask her to talk me the truth to-day."

But from day to day he hesitated; failure to win this girl would mean for him life-long regret. He had led a solitary existence—solitary as far as any ties of the heart were concerned. Though his creed was one of human brotherhood, he had always had an empty place in his heart waiting to be filled.

He had never known of this empty place till lately, and simultaneously with his knowledge of the void there had come to him the knowledge that Liora was the only being who could fill it—the woman for whom his heart had waited always.

And now that she had come into his life to complete it, to fill the void that, hitherto unseen, had always existed, was it only as a shadow, a visible possibility, but an impossible reality? Soon he must go back to all that till within four months ago life had meant for him—to business, and to the love of his fellow men and women, which was the only love he had known.

It was the day before he should leave London. His stay could not be protracted, Calthorpe had not had his summer holiday yet. He took his way towards Kensington. Would he to-day decide his fate? would he to-day exchange uncertainty for the knowledge that life held for him the greatest happiness or the greatest misery? Business was now a mere circumstantial detail.

Now love meant life for him—a happy life if he should win and wear it, the reverse if he should lose. All hinged on Liora's decision; his life was in her hands to deal with as she would. Yes, to-day must end the uncertainty if possible. It might be impossible; he might not be able to see her alone, for instance. He almost hoped that this would be the case, it would give him a respite without making him seem cowardly in his own eyes.

And then, looking up, he saw, like an answer to his thought, Liora herself coming along the street towards him. She was alone; nothing therefore stood in the way of his asking the question that burned in his very soul, the answer to which he longed for, yet dreaded.

"I thought you were going back to Liverpool to-day," she said, when she came up with him.

His heart sank. She took so little interest in him, then, that she did not know when he should leave London, though he had mentioned the day of his departure to her.

Liora remembered perfectly well, he is said, that the next day and not this one was the day when he should go back to Liverpool, and she had a very good idea also for what purpose he was taking his way along Kensington High-street. He was going to see her, to say good-bye, and something more if he had the

chance. Her coolness was assumed to make him think that she had no idea of his purpose.

"No, to-morrow I go back," he said, in answer to Liora's remark.

"And when shall we see you again in London?"

Again the use of the plural word "we" took from her question all undercurrent of personal interest.

"I do not quite know." He was looking into her face to see if he could read the answer he ought to make. "Not for a long time, I'm afraid. Where are you going?" he wound up with irrelevance.

"I am on my way to Kensington gardens to look over a novel I wrote, in hopes that the trees will inspire me with ideas that might improve it."

"May I come with you?"

"Yes, of course, and perhaps you will suggest something that would improve the story."

"Is that *Written in Sand*?"

"Yes, how do you know about it?"

"I think you mentioned it to me yourself." He was determined not to betray his knowledge of the scene he had witnessed when she had returned home with the rejected novel.

"Did I?" she asked. "I don't think I—"

"Is it finished?" he interrupted.

"Yes, it is supposed to be finished. I fancy it wants some alterations."

"You know all the critics, of course?"

"I don't know one."

"But you can get at them"—he laughed, at his own way of putting it—"through other people that do know them?"

"No, I don't think so," she said, vaguely. "Well, at least you knew all the society journalists—the people who write paragraphs descriptive of the beauty of your costumes, the perfection of your face and figure, the artistic decoration of your home, and so forth."

"Now you are laughing at me," said Liora. "I know I am what people call rather good-looking, but not beautiful. As to my dresses, I only possess three, and they are all home-made and look it; and if we have chairs and tables at home, we have certainly nothing decorative or artistic."

"The non-existence of beauty has nothing to do with it. It is the business of the society paragraphist to make it exist in print. Dress yourself in a sack if you like, have one room to live in, and that of the most unpromising description, cultivate a rufin and a turned-up nose, and it does not matter so long as the public see you through the medium of society journalism. Instead of the sack they will see trailing garments worn with artistic grace; instead of the plainly furnished apartment they will picture the paragraphed celebrity as passing his or her days in a palace of dazzling splendour; instead of the squint and the turned-up nose, they will believe in 'clear eyes, scintillating with the brilliancy that looks within,' and in 'faultless Grecian features.' I cannot tell you what is the charge for these manufactured attributes, but—"

"But I don't want attributes manufactured for me," put in Liora, laughing, in spite of herself.

"Then you don't want to be a celebrated authoress?"

"I want to write novels and make a little money by them, that is all. I don't see what beauty has to do with writing a novel."

"It helps to make the novelist, and therefore the novel, popular through the medium of the press. The press is only a trap to catch the public."

"Mr. Hampden, I don't believe all this!"

"No, you believe in fame, in art, in genius, in all that made greatness in the past, the greatness of a Shakespeare, of a Raphael. That won't go down nowadays though. Nowadays fame is replaced by name, and name is equivalent to advertisement. Forgive me for telling you the truth, but you haven't it in you to make a popular novelist. You are wanting in the

most necessary qualification for popularity—cheek. Now I have vexed you," for suddenly Liora's eyes had filled with tears.

She had by this time almost got over the disappointment she had felt at the rejection of her novel. Other novelists had had their books rejected, and those very books had afterwards become popular.

"Written in Sand" certainly wanted some alterations, she saw that for herself; but that it had not been bought by one publisher was no reason why another should not buy it.

Not being weighed down by any present anxiety as regards Charlie, Liora's hopes had risen once more, and now Mr. Hampden threw cold water on them.

"No, you haven't vexed me," and she struggled to keep down her emotion; "but it is so hard to know what is best to do. You say I haven't enough cheek to be a novelist, and Mrs. Colin thought I had too much to be a governess. How am I to know what I am fitted for?"

"I know what you are fitted for," he replied, gravely.

"What?"

"My wife."

They had strolled up the Broad Walk to the Round Pond, and they had taken possession of one of the seats close to the edge of the water.

The place was almost deserted; with the exception of a couple of rangers who were dimly visible through the trees, and some boys who were sailing their model yachts at the farther end of the pond, there was no one in sight.

Time and place combined to give Henry Hampden an opportunity to speak. This sudden declaration of his love after the hesitation that for weeks had kept him tongue-tied, was in keeping with the suddenness with which love had come to him.

Now, having passed the Rubicon, he went on readily enough. He told her how he had loved her from the first evening he had set eyes on her; how all his life ever since had been filled with the thought of her; how all his life that was yet before him should be hers, if she would have it.

"Liora—even if only for this once I may call you that—Liora!" She did not seem to think it strange, after all, that a man old enough to be her father almost should be telling her of his love with all the ardour of a boy, with more anxiety and devotion than any boy could feel in his kindly eyes and in the tones of his voice, half-stifled with emotion.

"Liora, be my wife, and my whole life will be completed. Be my wife, and in my own happiness I will seek only for yours, and I will make your happiness not merely because I can change your mode of life, and take you away from the struggle which you yourself have shown me, but because I love you. I love you, and my love will perfect your life, as yours will perfect mine."

She had grown very pale, the strength of this love frightened her. Twice she opened her lips to speak, but the words would not come. The silence was worse for him than any words she could have uttered.

"For Heaven's sake speak to me," he implored.

"I cannot—it is impossible. I—I don't love you," she faltered, feeling somehow that her love for Jack Lancelot, and his for her, which made this love an impossibility, was a contemptible thing compared with the passion that spoke in every line of Hampden's face, in every movement of his clenched hands.

"It is impossible—impossible," she repeated.

He bowed his head and was silent for a minute.

"Are you sure—quite sure?" he asked, with terrible earnestness.

"I am quite sure I do not love you."

"Some day, perhaps," he began slowly, as a gleam of hope sought to lighten the darkness that had closed with her answer.

"No, never!" she interrupted, quickly, "never! I will never love you, never!" she spoke with more vehemence than she intended. She had no thought of wounding his feelings.

He, however, seeing in her vehemence an intimation that he had no right to press the matter on her, rose at once and held out his hand.

"Good-bye," he said.

She gave a swift, frightened, upward glance, and saw the sad look of hopelessness that was on his face.

"I am sorry," she said, "oh, you don't know how sorry I am." She gave him her hand.

He released it quickly. "Good-bye," he repeated, in a hoarse whisper.

"Good-bye."

There was something very like a sob in her voice.

She remained sitting there alone for about an hour, till a young man, with a look at her that had she seen it would have made her feel uncomfortable, came and sat down on the seat beside her. Her thoughts, thus interrupted, she rose and took her way homewards.

"I have done nothing, thought of nothing to improve this novel after all," she said to herself. "I don't suppose it's much use either."

CHAPTER VII.

"WHAT would you say to my joining the Blue Royals, Liora?"

"Joining the—the Blue Royals?" queried Liora, puzzled, looking up from the type-writer she was manipulating. "What do you mean, Charlie?"

"I mean that I'm going to enlist. There's nothing else for it."

An expression of pain crossed Liora D'Arey's face; but she pretended to treat the subject lightly, and merely said, "Don't talk nonsense, Charlie."

"But it isn't nonsense. I mean it, really. It's no use trying any more for employment; I seem to be an absolute ignoramus. I can only answer 'No' to all their confounded questions about book-keeping and shorthand and rubbish of that kind. Even my writing doesn't please them, because it isn't that vulgar characterless kind known as a business hand. Bah! I wish to goodness I hadn't got that scholarship."

"Oh, Charlie!" Liora had often wished it herself, but it hurt her to hear her brother express the same wish. She knew what a struggle it had been for the past three years to make up the money necessary to keep him at Oxford; and her struggle had been in vain after all!

"I do wish it, Dora," he said, in reply to her feeble protest. "What's been the good of classical learning? It won't bring me a son!"

"But a university career is supposed to be the best training—"

"Oh yes, I know all that," interposed Charlie. "A fellow must be able to tack a degree on to the end of his name though, before he can convince people that he has been at the university. Who'll take the trouble to inquire what you've done or what honours you've taken. A degree tells them all that."

A degree! there was the sore point. Liora knew how great a trial of patience it was to Charlie to think that he had worked all these three years for nothing at all. He had to stop short of his degree, and all because there was not any money forthcoming to pay his expenses for a single year. Of course it wasn't a matter of eking out the scholarship; the term over which that benefit had extended was at an end. The entire expense would have to be met.

It was out of the question.

Type-writing was not a very remunerative occupation, as Liora found, nor was the fan-

light of the house in Kensington villas always innocent of the intimation that there were rooms to let. Mrs. D'Arey was not long enough established to have a connection, and what money she did scrape together from letting apartments barely covered the expenses of the house itself. Latterly, too, Mrs. D'Arey had been more or less ailing, and an additional drain was made on the D'Areys' very slender purse by the occasional visits of the doctor.

At length that which Liora dreaded most of all came upon them—debt; they didn't owe much—twenty pounds would have covered their liabilities—but twenty pounds is a great deal to those who haven't got it.

Now that Charlie's college fees had not to be thought of, Liora thought that the deficiency would soon be overcome; she had not at the same time reckoned on Charlie's remaining at home without employment. Her dream of the home Charlie was to provide was over.

"About enlisting," Charlie went on, determined to pursue the topic. "I'm quite in earnest, Liora."

Liora did not know what to say.

"It's better than eating the bread of idleness, and I might rise to a commission. What do you say to the Blue Royals? They won't be sent abroad again for an age. They are at Dover now."

"At Dover?" Liora started.

"Yes. They were once in Belfast, don't you remember—a crack lot."

Liora's beating heart and flushed cheeks testified that she did remember, but Charlie saw nothing of the red signal and he continued,—

"By the way, one of the chaps was spooney on you, Lancelot wasn't it? He's a captain now. You might put in a word for Private D'Arey."

"Charlie I wish you wouldn't talk like this. You, with your brains, to waste your life! Besides, you have some pride left surely?"

"There's not much good in pride when you've no coin. It's an expensive luxury, is pride."

"You mustn't enlist," repeated Liora, gravely. "It would break mother's heart. Promise you will do nothing rash! something will turn up."

"Well, I'll wait a week or two longer if you can afford to feed me," Charlie answered, laughing good-humouredly. "How's the mater to-day?" he wound up.

Liora shook her head.

"This has been a bad day with her. I made her lie down, she's always worse on a cold day. I wish the winter was over," she said this with a sigh. "If she could only have gone abroad!"

"I suppose it couldn't be managed, Liora?"

"Now, how could it?" and having said this, Liora had said all. The doctor's prescription of wintering abroad was an absolutely unattainable one.

Liora strove to keep her thoughts from dwelling on the piece of intelligence conveyed to her by Charlie, namely, that the Blue Royals were home again. And Jack Lancelot had never given word or sign that he wished to renew the friendship—more than friendship—of long ago. She concluded at first that he was as yet unaware of her whereabouts, but she knew he could ascertain that easily enough from more than one mutual friend; as days passed, however, and he still remained silent, she determined to put her conclusion to the test. One of these mutual friends—the wife of a former Colonel of the Blue Royals,—retired before the regiment went abroad—who had kept up a correspondence with Liora during all these years, happened to write to her at this very time.

"I see that young Lancelot has got his company," she said in her letter. "I am going to write one of these days to congratulate him. Shall I send any message from you?"

Mrs. "Colonel" Viner had often chafed

Lora about her "flirtation" with Jack; that there was anything more serious underlying it she never imagined. Nor did the tone of Lora's reply arouse any suspicion of the truth.

"You can congratulate Mr.—I mean Captain Lancelot from me, if he remembers me, that is."

"Now," thought Lora, "if he wants to look me up, he has only to ask Mrs. Viner for my address."

Time went on, and still the silence remained unbroken.

"He has forgotten me," thought Lora, and her heart grew very heavy.

She had waited for him for five long years, not doubting but that he would keep the trust. It had seemed a dishonour to his memory that she had heard the words of love from another. And how had he held her memory? He had forgotten.

The anxiety which Lora was suffering for those at home—for her mother's health and her brother's future—was after all a mercy to her. It kept her from thinking too much of her lover's faithlessness.

One afternoon Charlie D'Aroy entered the house with unusual vigour; he had been out hunting for employment, and on these occasions he generally came in too tired and dejected even to make a row in the hall.

To-day he did make a row with his stick and his latch-key, and he dashed into the sitting-room, so that Lora looked up quickly from the manuscript of a play which a dramatic author had sent to be type-written.

"News!" cried Charlie. "Something has turned up at last!"

"What?" asked Lora.

She rose to her feet in her excitement. "Mr. Hampden!" was the answer. "I met him in Ludgate hill. He's a trump. He's offered me a situation as clerk in his office in Liverpool. It's hateful to go and be a clerk, but it's better than eating you and the mater out of house and home."

(To be continued.)

THE SOUND OF A LAUGH.

(Continued from page 273.)

"Ceil! how unfair. Was he not Stephen's trust, most devoted friend in the time of trouble? How can you say he did nothing?"

Nora has raised herself on her elbow, her blue eyes are shining with excitement, there is a pink spot in each fair cheek.

"Lie down, darling," cries Cecil, anxiously, crossing over to the sofa and shaking up the cushions. "You must not excite yourself. I will go down to this mournful young man; but I warn you we shall quarrel. We always do."

Nora and Kitty smile at each other, they have gained their point.

"You must come too, Kitty," cries Cecil, flushing hotly. "I—I will not go alone."

"Goodness!" laughs Kitty, jumping up, "are you afraid of Hugh?"

"Afraid!" scornfully, "oh, no!" then inconsistently, "but I won't go down alone."

"Oh, I'll come; Humphrey is there too. Oh! here is Stephen! He'll take care of Nora," she cries, as her brother hurries in, a happy light in his kind eyes.

"The boys are in the drawing-room, are not you girls going down?" he says, seating himself beside Nora.

"Just off," laughs Cecil, bending to kiss the invalid's happy face.

"Be kind to him, dear," Nora whispers.

"Of course," in surprised tones; "am I not always so?"

She goes away with a queer little laugh, and Kitty is following, when Stephen stops her.

"Won't you be in the way?" he says, with a suggestive laugh.

"Rather; but she won't go down without me. I'll just get her safely into the room, and then Humphrey and I will—"

"Bolt?" suggests Stephen, smiling.

"Precisely. Humphrey will understand. Now let me go. I don't want to rouse her suspicions."

"No, no. I'll bring Nora down in about an hour's time. Will they have settled it by then?"

"Don't you know?" demands Kitty, with a laughing glance at Nora. "I should think an hour quite enough."

She runs away then, and slipping her arm in Cecil's, draws her gently into the drawing-room.

Humphrey is seated at the piano playing bits of the latest comic opera. Hugh is lying back in a great chair with his hand pressed to his forehead. Cecil, glancing hurriedly at him as she comes slowly forward, is startled to see how worn and pallid he looks.

"Got a headache?" she asks, kindly.

He starts up, and holding her little cool hand, looks wretchedly at the bright face.

"Yes, rather," he says, slowly. "You look well enough."

"Yes," she answers, carelessly, "nursing suits me." Then softly, "I—I'm sorry you have a headache, Hugh. Shall I try to cure it?"

As she asks the question she looks straight at the miserable young man, with such sweet sympathy in her dark eyes that his anger is conquered, and he is only restrained by the presence of the other two from drawing her into his arms and kissing her. As it is, he only answers foolishly,—

"If you like."

As Cecil walks over to a distant table for a bottle of scent, her eyes fall on Humphrey and Kitty stealing towards the door.

"Where are you going?" she cries, sharply.

"For a walk," says Humphrey, promptly, and, pulling Kitty outside, bangs the door, then drops in an exhausted manner on to a hall chair.

"Close shave that," he gasps. "In another minute he would have proposed to her. Get your hat, old girl, and come for a walk."

But, after all, Hugh's progress is not so rapid as Humphrey imagines. He smiles contentedly when he is alone with Cecil; but he keeps perfectly silent as the girl, with a heightened colour, and a tiny frown wrinkling her white forehead, comes back to him armed with a huge bottle of eau-de-cologne.

"Is that for my head?" he asks, quietly.

"Yes," softly. "Lie down, and I'll put some on your forehead."

Hugh does not at all object to the touch of the soft, scent-wetted hand on his burning forehead, but he does not approve of the coquettish speech which accompanies her ministrations.

"I am clever at curing headaches," she remarks. "I had plenty of practice at the hospital."

He frowns fiercely at that, and turns away so abruptly that she spills some of the scent.

"Did you practise on the doctors?" he asks, savagely, and glaring at her severely.

She does not answer the question, only looks down with a conscious smile.

"You've spilt the scent," she says, demurely.

"Did you?" he persists, and is favoured with a very innocent, wondering glance.

"Oh, no!" she cries, in shocked tones, "only on the children. How could you think such a thing?"

"Oh, I don't know!" he says, wearily; "the idiots would only be too glad."

"Yes, I daresay," she retorts, coquettishly, laying her cool hand on his forehead again and thereby rendering him desperate.

"So Vane has proposed and been rejected?" he growls, after a short silence.

Cecil pours some more scent on her hand and lays it carefully on the soft, wavy locks above the broad forehead, then asks, coolly,—

"Who told you?"

"I met him looking like a small ghost, and he blurted out the whole tale."

"And he was looking wretched?" queries the girl, without the faintest blush.

He frowns angrily.

"Ceil, I believe you rejoice in his misery!"

Cecil bites her lip, and meets his glance very frankly.

"He was too conceited," she says, quietly. "I showed him plainly I could never like him—yet he insisted on rushing on his doom!"

Hugh's face brightens wonderfully as he listens to that impatient speech.

"Why couldn't you like him?" he ventures, eagerly, catching the hand that hovers above his head.

"Oh, because he is so conceited," begins the girl, with great spirit, "and—and"—her voice sinking and dragging her hand away—"because I love someone else!"

Hugh scowls at that. The halting little speech, instead of making him turn and take the girl in his arms, causes him to abandon the sofa and walk over to the fireplace, sighing heavily as he goes. She means to tell him something about that confounded fellow in the Guards, he thinks, miserably, and never sees the angry, perplexed expression in Cecil's dark eyes.

"It's Verrinocourt, I suppose?" he jerks out.

"No it's not," with a little angry stamp of her foot; "and—and," with a great choking sob, "I shall go back to Nora, and leave you to your own stupid company!"

She starts up and makes for the door, but Hugh is too quick for her; with a glad cry he starts forward and drags her back to the fireplace.

"What an idiot I am!" he exclaims, gazing at the sweet, upturned face. "If not with Verrinocourt, then you are in love with—"

"Snip, short-sighted Hugh Raincliffe!" she cries, petulantly, blushing hotly as she speaks.

"You have made me very happy, sweet-heart!" he says, stooping, and leaving a kiss on the pretty red lips.

"I told Nora we should be sure to quarrel," she remarks, pensively.

"Ah, Nora knew that it would all come right," retorts Hugh, serenely, drawing her down on to the sofa. And after that the treatment of the headache proceeds in a highly satisfactory fashion.

"I say Kitty, this is uncommonly jolly! I like to see you sitting opposite to me. Kind of Darby and Joan, you know."

Humphrey and the youngest Miss Pomeroy are once more patronising their favourite confectioner, but this time their conversation is not of such a serious nature.

"Is it?" says matter-of-fact Kitty, "Can't see it myself, Humphrey, if you tip your chair so far back you'll go over, and I shall have to carry home the bits."

Humphrey brings his chair back to its proper position and looks at her reproachfully.

"How you damp a fellow's ardour!" he cries, comically. "I was going in for a bit of sentiment."

"Don't, then," says Kitty, promptly, "I hate it!"

"But we'll be married in the end, old girl?" cries Humphrey, anxiously. "Not just yet, of course; but the years will soon pass."

Kitty nods at him kindly.

"Haven't I promised?" she demands, touched by the wisfulness of his glance.

"Let's see!" he goes on, laughing gaily. "I should think we might manage it in four years."

"Oh, I should think so," agrees Kitty, calmly, "I've heard a doctor ought to marry young, and you'll be twenty-three then."

Humphrey leans back, and bursts into a fit of laughter so merry and infectious that the solemn Kitty is obliged to smile.

"Ob, dear!" he gasps, "you'll be the death of me some day, old girl!"

"Don't be foolish!" severely. "See here! If you've quite finished devouring cakes we'd better go."

"Well, I like that!" he cries, indignantly. "You've eaten quite as many."

"Keep to the truth, and pay the bill," says the young lady, sententiously.

Five minutes later they are nearing home, and, reflecting on what may have occurred during their absence, they gradually slacken their pace, and glance nervously at each other.

"I feel as shy as I did at my first operation," remarks Humphrey. "She may have scratched Hugh's eyes out."

"Humphrey," cries Kitty, crossly, "how can you speak so of my sweet Cecil? More likely your bad-tempered Hugh has driven the darling away with his horrid jealousy."

"Humph! your 'sweet Cecil,' as you call her, can be very aggravating," he retorts, and says not another word until they stand outside the drawing-room door.

"I feel doubtful," he says; then, hesitating, "What do you think, Kitty?"

"That we must go in," she answers, decidedly.

"I dare not," he mutters in tragic tones, and, wheeling round, rushes upstairs. Kitty, glancing after him, sees that Nora and Stephen are coming down, and that the lad has rushed away to offer his arm to the invalid.

"Well?" says Nora, eagerly as they reach the hall.

"We know nothing yet, dear," whispers Kitty. "We've been for a walk and dare not go in."

"But I dare," Nora cries, in the invalid's petted tone. "Come, good people!" and drawing her hand from Stephen's, she falteringly but quickly passes into the drawing-room.

"Nora!" cries Cecil, who is the first to see her, "you alone!"

Then, seeing the eager faces just behind Nora, she colours deeply and grows shy and silent.

"Tell me," cries Nora, in agitated tones and looking eagerly at the two conscious faces, "are you—are you—?"

"Yes, we are," breaks in Hugh in an incoherent but highly satisfactory manner.

"For better, for worse?" queries Kitty, archly.

"Yes," says Hugh, gravely, his eyes resting lovingly on Cecil, "till death us do part."

"Oh, my darling!" whispers Nora, drawing the girl down beside her, "I am, indeed, happy to-night!"

And Cecil smiles brightly and kisses the sweet face; then with a glow in her fair face, yet with a quaint dignified air, she turns to receive her family's congratulations; and so the little drama with its tragic commencement and happy ending is played out, the curtain comes slowly down hiding the bright faces from our gaze, and leaving us to determine their future as it seems best to us.

[THE END.]

For long distance swimming the shark may be said to hold the record, as he can outstrip the swiftest ships, apparently without effort, swimming and playing around them, and even on the look-out for prey. Any human being falling overboard in shark-frequented waters has very little chance of escape, so rapid is the action of the shark, the monster of the deep. The dolphin, another fast-swimming fish, is credited with a speed of considerably over twenty miles an hour. For short distances the salmon can outstrip every other fish, accomplishing its twenty-five miles an hour with ease. The Spanish mackerel is one of the fastest of food fishes, and cuts the water like a yacht. Predatory fishes are generally the fastest swimmers.

FAÇETIÆ.

A NEWS SHOP.—Stranger: "Say, boy, can you show me a news shop?" Boy: "Here's one, gov'nor." Stranger: "That's a barber's." Boy: "Well, they'll tell you everything that's happened—and more."

"My husband received a note to-day in a woman's handwriting." "Did you open it?" "I did not. And what is more, I left him by himself to read it at his leisure." "Don't you worry over it?" "No, but I think he does. It was from my dressmaker."

"What are you doing, you young rascal," said a farmer to a remarkably small boy on finding him under a tree in his orchard with an apple in his hand. "Please, sir, I was only going to put this 'ere apple back on the tree, sir. It had fallen down, sir."

Mrs. LUDWIG (a year married): "Now tell me, Charles, did you ever tell me a falsehood?" Mr. L.: "No, not that I know of. Of course, I mean since we were married. What I used to tell you when we were courting doesn't count, you know."

BROGS: "Let's start a newspaper. You furnish the money and I'll supply the brains." Diggs: "Agreed. If we both put in our whole capital we shall have the satisfaction of knowing that we can never lose anything."

"I am glad to see you on your feet again, Mr. Barrows," said Miss Parlaw, graciously. "You looked very bad last time I saw you." "You must be mistaken, Miss Parlaw," said Barrows. "I have never been ill. Where did you see me last?" "You were in the park—a—horseback."

A SOMEWHAT unpolished mother of a very charming daughter was recently heard to say: "I don't intend lettin' Emily go back to Madam Waxing's school. They don't teach 'em right. Now, I don't know so very much myself, but I would never tell my child that IX spells nine. It's absolutely ridiculous."

It is related by a clergyman that, as he was walking down the street one day, he saw a little fellow undertaking to ring a door-bell. In the kindness of his heart he stepped up to the boy, and, saying a kind word to him, assisted in ringing the bell. The little fellow looked up to the reverend doctor and said, "Mister, it is time for us to bolt now!"

MAGISTRATE: "Has prisoner been convicted before?" Constable: "No, your honour." Magistrate: "Prisoner, I shall give you the benefit of the doubt." Prisoner (notorious poacher): "Thank'ee, sir." Magistrate: "Oh, I'm not going to let you off. If you haven't been convicted before, you ought to have been. Three months' hard labour."

DOCTOR: "I see what the matter is; you do not get sleep enough. Get this prescription made up." Mr. Blinkers: "Thank you. I presume that's what's the matter." Doctor (next day): "Ah, good morning. You are looking much better to-day. Slept last night, didn't you?" Mr. Blinkers: "Slept like a top. I feel first-rate." Doctor: "How many doses of that opiate did you take?" Mr. Blinkers (in surprise): "I didn't take any. I gave it to the baby."

In a ferry-boat in the West of Scotland a well-dressed commercial insisted on sitting in the bows, though warned by one of the boatmen of the danger there existed of the rope by which the boat was hauled over jerking him overboard. This accident happened as predicted, but the boatman caught him by the collar of his coat in going over, which, being shoddy, gave way. A second time the man clutched him, this time by the shirt-collar, but, alas, it was paper, and gave way also. The disgusted boatman made a third clutch, this time at his hair, only to bring away an ample wig. This was too much even for the phlegmatic Sandy, who called to his fellow boatman: "Here, Jock, gie's a hand; this chief's coming awa' in bits!"

"Did you ask your husband where he was last night?" ask the much interested neighbour. "Yes; and I have every reason to believe he told me the truth." "Indeed?" "Yes. He said he didn't know."

SHE WAS SORRY FOR HIM.—"You have a new bean, Ethel?" "Yes, and he's a perfect treasure." "Indeed?" "Yes; he neither drinks, smokes, nor chews, and what is more, he never loved a girl till he saw me, nor—nor kissed one either." "I'm sorry for him." "Why?" "I'm sorry to think that a young man who neither drinks, smokes, nor chews should be such a liar."

FATHER: "Johnny, there's a button off your coat. Go upstairs and sew it on." Little Johnny (in surprise): "Mother will sew it on." Father: "I know she will, but I want you to learn to sew on buttons yourself." Johnny (amazed): "Why?" Father solemnly: "Some day, Johnny, when you grow up, you won't have any mother—nothing but a wife."

They were sitting together in the moonlight, and he was trying hard to think of something pleasant to say. All of a sudden she gave a slight shiver. "Are you cold, darling?" he asked, anxiously. "I will get my coat round you, if you like." "Well, yes," said she, shyly, with another little shiver. "I am a little cold, I confess; but you needn't put your coat round me. One of the sleeves will do."

Mrs. SPANKERS: "I wish to get a house in a quiet neighbourhood." Agent: "Yes, madam, we can accommodate you. I have a vacant house in a street which is as quiet as a Sabbath morn all the year round. No barking dogs, no children, no nuisance of any kind." Mrs. Spanker: "That's exactly what I want. How lucky I happened to come to you! How many rooms has it?" Agent: "Ten." Mrs. Spanker: "That's just right. We need a good deal of room. We have nine children. I hope there's space at the back for a dog-house. We have three."

Mrs. SUBURB: "Is this the house you've been talking about? I don't like it at all." Agent: "It's the latest Queen Anne style, mum." Mrs. Suburb: "I don't like it. The kitchen opens right into the parlour, or nearly so." Agent: "Yes, mum. Queen Anne was a famous cook, mum. She named that fine old apple pudding, 'Brown Betty,' after Queen Elizabeth, mum. Queen Elizabeth was noted for doing things up brown, you know, mum." Mrs. Suburb: "And, dear me, the cellar is half full of water." Agent: "Yes, mum. In those old days people always kept water on hand, to use in time of a siege, you know, mum."

ONE of the young lady teachers in the Carnaby Sunday school was lecturing her scholars a few Sundays ago upon the subject of temptation, and tried as well as she could to show how it sometimes came in the most attractive guise. To illustrate her meaning she directed the attention of the youngsters to the difference between the paws of a dog and those of a cat. "Now, children," said she, "you have all seen the paw of a cat?" "Yes'm," replied the class in chorus. "It is soft and sleek like velvet, isn't it?" she went on. "Yes'm," again from the class. "Now," she continued, "a dog's paw is very different, isn't it?" Again the class assented. "Very good," said the teacher. "Now, although pussy's paw is so nice and velvety, there is still something about it that hurts. Whocan tell me what it is?" No response from the class. "Can you not tell me that?" said the young lady, with some surprise. "When a dog is angered he bites. What does a cat do?" "Scratches," answered the youngsters. "That's right; but don't say 'scratches,' say 'scratches,' said the young lady, who is nothing if not precise. "Now, what has the cat got that the dog has not?" "Whiskers!" simultaneously exclaimed three or four of the scholars, and the lesson came to an abrupt close amid the half-suppressed tittering of the class.

SOCIETY.

BABY BLUE is the very height of fashion. A JAPANESE girl is learning dentistry in Chicago.

GOLD shoe buttons, set with jewels, are the latest caprice of the very rich.

THE German Emperor is said to have posed before a camera one hundred and forty times since he ascended the throne.

TURKISH are now three lady commercial travellers who go the rounds regularly for drapery houses in London.

IT is alleged that not one of Johann Strauss's family can wait a step, although they have been waiting dance music for three generations.

THE Duchess of Edinburgh and her daughters are to be in England during the next two months—at Clarence House, at Devonport, and at Osborne—and Prince Ferdinand in England in order that he may be introduced to the Queen.

THE rage for ribbons increases, and the chief aim of the milliners and dressmakers seems now to try to get as many yards as possible on each article. Fortunately, the ribbons chiefly used are not wide, though on some gowns and mantles tolerably broad ones are seen.

THE Queen loved gooseberry-pudding when a child, and always looked forward to have the first taste of it on Whit Sunday in each year. Since the time of Queen Anne, gooseberry-puddings, gooseberry-tarts, stewed gooseberries and custards have always graced the Royal dinner tables on Whit Sunday, Whit Monday and Whit Tuesday.

THE Queen, who is in excellent health and spirits, continues to lead a perfectly quiet life at Balmoral. Every fine afternoon her Majesty has taken a long drive; but she has not yet visited Braemar, the excursions having been confined to Birkhall, the Glawalt Shield on Loch Muik, the Falls of Garbh Allt, and other places which can be reached by the private drives which extend for many miles within the Royal domain.

SINCE that wee person, the Lady Alexandra Duff, came to gladden the hearts of her parents, it has been noticed that the Duke and Duchess of Fife have actively interested themselves in all charities which are associated with the welfare of little folks. They seem to have constituted themselves, for the sake of their own beloved girls, the patrons of all institutions devoted to the care of children. Little Lady Alexandra is only a small person, but her influence is evidently great, and by the touch of her baby fingers she has, as it were, won the sympathy and aid of her parents for all weak and unfortunate and suffering little ones. Baby voices are not infrequently of more service to charities than the eloquence of a whole bench of bishops.

NOTHING in the personal appearance of small Queen Wilhelmina would warrant the belief that she was born for a Throne; but she is a chubby, happy-looking child of the same Waldeck type as her mother and her aunt, the Duchess of Albany. Whether she will always be as amiable as the pair of Princesses who were such devoted nurses to their ailing husbands is a question for Time to answer. A Queen Regnant usually studies her own convenience and wishes first, and can issue orders to a spouse instead of receiving them. At the present moment, her Majesty Wilhelmina is slightly disfigured by a pair of ears which look too large for her head; but if they remain as they are while the rest of her grows, or her hair is arranged to partly cover them, she will be voted charming enough when the time comes for the greatest heiress in Europe to choose a consort.

STATISTICS.

THERE are 50,000 muscles in an elephant's trunk.

THERE are three thousand female composers in the United States.

IT is estimated that it would take upwards of forty years for the water in the great lakes to pour over Niagara at the rate of one million cubic feet a second.

IT is estimated that over 100,000,000 of people now speak the English language, over 60,000,000 German, and over 41,000,000 French.

ENGLISHMEN are increasing nearly seven times as fast as Frenchmen. At the beginning of the century France had a population of twenty-seven millions, and England sixteen millions. Now the numbers of each are almost the same, or about thirty-eight millions.

GEMS.

WHEREVER luxury ceases to be innocent, it also ceases to be beneficial.

THERE is nothing like prosperity to cover faults, and it may be said that money covers more than charity.

MAN who attributes all their failures to fate never think their successes may be due to the same cause.

MANKIND moves onward through the night of time like a procession of torch-bearers, and words are the lights which the generations carry. By means of those they kindle abiding lamps beside the track which they have passed, and some of them, like the stars, shall shine for ever and ever.

IT is all owing to what a man is proud of. If he is proud of his honour and integrity, proud of his blameless life and his efforts to benefit his race, he is the right kind of a man. But if he is proud of his looks, his clothes, his wealth, his birth, or his learning, he is a fool.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

FOR a tea-dish, when fruit is scarce, take one quart of rich milk, one cup of sugar, a small piece of butter, and a teaspoonful of almond flavouring. When boiling, thicken with corn-starch and two cups of stoned dates. Set on ice. Ice the top, and ornament with dates.

A LITTLE camphor placed on every window-sill will keep out flies except in the kitchen where the temptation is stronger and the remedy of necessity a little more stringent. But a little camphor sprinkled on the cooking-stove now and again will drive out the pests and keep them out, while it will also neutralize the unpleasant odour of cooking.

TO OPEN A LOBSTER.—A great many people are uncertain exactly how to proceed in opening a lobster. Lay the lobster on a hard board on a table. Have a hatchet or a meat cleaver at hand. Take off the tail with the hand. Turn the tail over, and cut open the thin shell on the under side and remove the meat entire. Take away the fine black vein which runs through the middle of the tail. This is the intestinal vein, and is connected with the stomach, all of which is thrown away. Split the two large claws with a cleaver and remove the meat inside. The large claw has a bone in it, and this must be taken out. Remove each of the little claws at the side of the body, and split them carefully to remove the meat. Insignificant though they appear, they will be found to contain a large amount of delicate meat. When this is done, cut open the body, throw away the soft substance, which is the stomach, but remove all the white meat which you find, of which there is comparatively little.

MISCELLANEOUS.

A NAILLESS horse-shoe, that is fastened to the hoof with a clasp, is coming into use in Paris.

THE University of Oxford has appliances for printing one hundred and fifty different languages.

AN oil-painting constantly hung in a dark place loses some of its vividness, and therefore depreciates in value.

THE Turkish government has forbidden the importation of all patent medicines into that country.

THE city of London proper is only one mile square, but so valuable is its real estate that it produces a rental of seven million dollars a year.

A RULE has just been introduced at all the theatres of Italy by which the performers are forbidden, under pain of fine, to receive flowers during a representation, or to notice in any way the presence of the audience.

FARMERS in Mexico always use oxen of one colour in the morning, and of another colour in the afternoon. They do not know why; but they know that it must be the right thing to do, because their forefathers did it.

GOLD was probably the first metal discovered and used. It was mined in Egypt and well known in the Eastern Empires 1800 years B.C. It was doubtless known and used in India many hundred years before this period.

SOME time ago a St. Louis man nailed a horse-shoe over the door of his house for good luck. One day as the man was about entering his home a bolt of lightning struck him and knocked him senseless. It transpired later that the electric current had first passed through the horse-shoe.

THE speed of a hawk or gull on the wing is almost incredibly great. One of the swiftest hawks could make a circle round the smoke-stack of a locomotive travelling sixty miles an hour, while a gull has often been known to fly before a favourable wind at the rate of 100 miles an hour.

IT appears that English working men prefer cocoa to coffee, and those engaged in furnishing temperance drinks to the working classes have found it necessary to change their beverage accordingly. The so-called "coffee houses" are now termed "cocoa palaces." It was thought to tempt the workman with the berry at half past five in the morning, but he demanded the soothing and comforting cocoa. In some places four or five cups of cocoa are sold to one of coffee. Coffee is regarded as a stimulant, cocoa as a food.

ACCORDING to the old legend, the letters of the alphabet were revealed to man by the gods; but according to Dr. Glaser, a German philologist, the Phœnician alphabet, from which the Greek and other European ones are derived, originated in Arabia among the ancestors of the Mincians and Sabæans, probably 3,000 B.C. Dr. Glaser has obtained inscriptions in phonetic characters from Arabia, which are probably 4,000 years old and more. If the early hieroglyphics of the Egyptians suggested a phonetic alphabet, they do not appear to have developed it.

IT is generally supposed that Equatorial Africa is the warmest place on earth, but it is not. The nights in the torrid zone frequently are cold. Travellers sleep, right over the equator, under a quilt and a pair of blankets. During the hottest month in Central Africa the thermometer never registers above ninety-six degrees. The interior of Equatorial Africa is not low land, not a steaming jungle, as is commonly supposed; the land rises as you go in from the coast, plateau on plateau, until it is from three to five thousand feet above the sea level, and we all know that with every three hundred feet of ascent the thermometer falls a degree.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LAURA.—Walt Sunday, 1873, was on May 19.
ANXIOUS MOTHER.—The boy would not be liable.
S. A.—The Septennial Act was passed May, 1716.
TIM.—Berkshire wills are proved at Oxford.
H. C. B.—Good Friday fell on March 25 in 1864.
NATTIE.—We do not quite understand to what you allude.
PAW.—"Penelope" is pronounced in four syllables, thus—Pen-el-o-pe.
SCHOOL BOY.—A child having passed the age of thirteen is free to leave school.
JUDY.—A weekly engagement requires a week's notice to terminate it.
OSGILL.—The distance from Liverpool to New York is 8,016 miles.
VINO.—Mails are taken on board at Brindisi, Italy, not at Port Said.
QUERIST.—"Ditty" is a "maiden city," because it successfully withstood a siege by King James's army.
CONSTANT READER.—The name "Cholmondeley" is pronounced as if spelt "Chumley."
MERCY.—Fulton Ferry is on the East River, not the Hudson, at New York.
LOVE-SICK.—Stamp crosswise in right-hand corner means "my heart is another's, and can never be yours."
AN OLD READER.—You are not obliged to find a home for your son if he is able to maintain himself elsewhere.
FLOUNDER.—Isaac Pitman, the inventor of phonography, was born in Trowbridge January 4, 1813.
SANDY.—There is no assisted emigration to Salt Lake City or any other part of the United States.
LIDDIE.—Whit Sunday, 1895, was on June 4. Trinity Sunday, as you may be aware, is always one week later.
LADY CLERK.—Twenty words per minute is the average rate at which longhand is written.
PETER PIPER.—War declared by France against Germany 16th July, 1870; treaty of peace signed 10th May, 1871.
TWO.—The *Anacanth* is one of the vessels driven ashore at Mauritius. It was expected she would be got off in safety.
T. C.—The only course left open to you is to state your case to the commander of the regiment. He will decide.
S. T.—The superintendent of the Sailors' Home near you might be able to answer the question. He will readily, if he can.
WIFE.—Bread was 11d. the 4lb. loaf in 1854 and 1855; the highest price it had reached since 1820. It was 10½d. in 1867.
ANXIOUS ONE.—If the marriage took place before January, 1888, the furniture bought with the wife's money before the marriage belongs to the husband.
SILAS.—The rocks called Hell Gate were blown up with dynamite to improve the entrance into New York Harbour, on 24th September, 1876.
MUDDLE.—A Chinese dollar is worth about 4s. 2d., or a little over five to the pound. Roughly speaking, 30,000 would be worth about £4,000.
THERESA.—If the widow is a householder she is liable for the rates unless they have been compounded by the landlord.
SABINA.—For particulars as to exhibits at the Chicago Exhibition, address the secretary, Society of Arts, John Street, Adelphi, London, W.C.
NERO.—General Roberts, with about 10,000 men, marched from Gabel to relieve Candahar August 9, 1880, arrived at Candahar August 31.
LUCRETIA.—The lines beginning "There is a tide in the affairs of men," etc., occur in "Julius Cæsar," Act 4, scene 3.
ADRIAN.—The word *trous* occurs in Job, chapter 41, verse 7, as follows: "Canst thou fill his skin with barbed iron, or his head with fish spears?"
DENIS.—Michael Barrett, for causing the Clerkenwell explosion, was executed May 26, 1868. This was the last public execution in England.
HAPPY ONE.—Apply to the vicar of your parish if you propose being married at church, or to the district registrar if you prefer a civil marriage.
POLLY.—For removing the stain of perspiration from underclothing, apply a pretty strong solution of soda, and then rinse repeatedly with clear, clean water.
F. P.—Clifton Suspension Bridge measures 702 ft. 3 in. from pier to pier, and its height above high water is 300 ft.
DOT.—The name *silhouette* is derived from its inventor, Etienne de Silhouette, a French minister of finance in 1757.
E. L.—The tube or funnel of canvas, employed to convey a stream of fresh air down into the lower part of a vessel, is called the windmill.
A SIV GIRL.—It is no longer "good company manners" not to have any choice or preference when asked by the host at dinner to nominate something.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE WILL BE COMMENCED A NEW STORY, ENTITLED,

"HILDRED ELSINORE,"

BY AN AUTHOR OF REPUTE.

NAOMI.—Shan, or chan, is a Chinese word signifying "mountain." It forms a part of numerous names in East Asia, as Thian-Shan (the Celestial Mountains), etc.

DERMOT.—"The Angels' Whisper," by Samuel Lover, was suggested by a superstition in Ireland that "when a child smiles in his sleep it is talking with the angels."

STANLEY.—The mammoth steamship *Great Eastern* was employed in 1864 to lay the Atlantic cable, and was used for purposes connected with it several times afterwards.

HUGH.—You have in any case your chance among other applicants, but if you are an active-looking man you will be preferred, and have no difficulty in obtaining an engagement.

PARTY PENKLOPE.—A person can come as fast as a letter from Honolulu, of course. The town is on the island of Hawaii, consequently part of the journey to San Francisco must be made on sea.

MARGUERITE.—The marriage of French subjects to be valid in France must be in strict accordance with French law, and this although the ceremony was performed in England.

WORRIED.—Rates are due on demand, but it is usual to make a second demand before taking out a summons. As a rule, the water-rate and inhabited-house duty are paid by the tenant.

PUZZLED.—There is no newspaper published at anything approaching such a price; but it is possible that a private circular, containing important information, may be periodically issued at a high subscription.

HOW GRANDPA PROPOSED.

"Tell you how grandpa proposed? Dear me! And grandma nodded her silvery head (Her hair was like gold in the days that were old, But the years had brought silver instead).
 "How your grandpa proposed? Dear me! Well, it happened the eve before Christmas, you see," (How grandma's dark eyes shone!)
 "And this tiny gold heart and this tiny gold key Your grandpa bought them and gave them to me.
 'I have brought you my heart. Will you keep it?' said he;
 'It will open to you, dear, alone.'
 And when in the heart I had fitted the key," (What a flash on the dear old face!)
 "I found that the space, just a large enough place, Held the tiniest picture of me!
 'Will you live in my heart for ever?' said he. And that's how your grandpa, proposed, dear, to me. And you think it 'as sweet as it ever could be'! Well, I thought so myself," said she.

TAUBLED ONE.—To remove dandruff, wash the scalp once in four or five days with cold water to which a few drops of ammonia have been added. Brush your hair frequently and thoroughly, and tone up your skin by improving your general health.

MAN.—The felt cloth which is made into hats is composed chiefly of the hair of rabbits, hares or goats, mixed with wool. These substances are entangled together, and pressed and beaten until they adhere to form a compact but flexible material.

IGNORANT.—The seven wonders of the world were given as the Pyramids of Egypt, the Temple of Ephesus, the mausoleum erected by Artemisia, the walls and hanging gardens of Babylon, the Colossus at Rhodes, the statue of Olympian Jupiter and the watch-tower of Alexandria.

YOUNG WIFE.—Grease stains on wall-paper may be removed by mixing pipe-clay with enough water to make a sort of cream. Spread this rather thickly on the stain, leave it on for twenty-four hours, then take it off carefully with a knife and dust and brush the paper thoroughly.

COLONEL NAWOME.—At a military funeral the firing party in two lines march first, then the band, next the gun carriage on which the coffin rests, soldiers walk on each side, next the relatives, and last of all the regiment. At the cemetery gate the firing party ground their arms and allow the body to pass between them; they follow the body and fire three volleys in the air.

BIRDIE.—The old-time story that the pelican, a large web-footed water-bird, feeds its young, when food is scarce, with blood drawn from its own breast, has nothing to verify it. It rose from the fact that the pelican feeds its young by pressing the red point of its bill against its breast, which brings up the fish from its pouch. The male bird does the same thing to feed the female when sitting.

HOPELESS.—An individual who has reached manhood's years without having developed an inclination towards any special trade or profession is not likely to succeed very well anywhere, and perhaps least of all in the colonies at present. The struggle for existence is keen enough at home, in all conscience, but it is keener in Australia and at the Cape, and only those who are eager to seize the passing chance get on at all.

L. MAYO.—To become well read, in the present state of literature, is a comparative matter. There is so much current printed matter, that one person could by no possibility keep the run of it all, and accordingly by a well-read person is meant one who has read the standard literary works and text-books. Your course is to obtain a good text-book on English literature and systematically read the books most highly praised in it.

SAM.—Fall River, and Lowell, Massachusetts, are the chief towns for your business in the States, but the industry is a declining one, and we could not recommend you to go out on the bare chance of finding employment in that line. If you go at all, it should be to New York, where there is what is called the Labour Bureau, maintained by Government, to enable the emigrants to ascertain where men of their stamp are "wanted" at that moment.

FAY.—The hair, when naturally white or flaxen which is often the case in childhood, contains phosphate of magnesia, which ultimately disappears in after age, when the hair usually becomes gradually darker. The colouring oil of black hair is of a dark green, which becomes lighter in the different shades from black to light brown. The colouring matter of red hair is a red that of golden hair is a modification of red, that of ashen a mixture of red and dark green, and that of white and flaxen is very nearly without colour.

ONE IN GREAT TROUBLE.—Where there is so radical a difference in religious faith as there is between you and the young man, it is altogether best to act as your family wish and break the engagement. Any transient pain should be endured rather than that a marriage should be entered upon which would cause endless disagreements between husband and wife in matters which both regard as vital. Any children that might be born to you would accordingly occasion discord. It would probably be a waste of your time and breath for you to change your prospective husband's religious views.

MYOSOTIS.—The popular tradition which tells how the plant which bears the name of forget-me-not came to be applied to it, is that a knight and a lady were walking by the side of the Danube, interchanging vows of devotion and affection, when the latter saw on the other side of the stream the bright blue flowers of the myosotis, and expressed a desire for them. The knight, eager to gratify her, plunged into the river, and, reaching the opposite bank, gathered a bunch of flowers. On his return, however, the current proved too strong for him; and, after many efforts to reach land, he was borne away. With a last effort he flung the fatal blossoms upon the bank, exclaiming, "Forget-me-not."

QUERIST.—Middy is an abbreviation for midshipman, which term originated from the place assigned to the "young gentlemen," as they used to be called, amidships, or abreast of the mainmast. A passed midshipman is a midshipman who has passed an examination entitling him to promotion to a Lieutenant whenever there occurs a vacancy in that grade. In October, 1810, a board of senior captains, of whom Commodore William Bainesbridge was the president, was ordered by the Secretary of the Navy to convene at New York to examine midshipmen for promotion. This was the first examination instituted in the American navy. It has continued ever since, and was the origin of the title "passed midshipman."

S. R.—Holy Thursday, the day on which the Saviour, at the last supper, instituted the sacrament of Eucharist, is also known as Maundy Thursday, many writers tracing the origin of Maundy from the ceremony of "washing the feet"; but others ascribe it to the old Saxon word *mand*, a basket, in which gifts used to be placed for distribution among the poor on the day before Good Friday. Be this as it may, the ceremonies formerly, and even at the present time, peculiar to this day among Catholics and Episcopalians, were many. Anotiently the kings and queens of England used to wash and kiss the feet of as many poor men and women as they were years old, in imitation of the humility of Christ to his disciples. Queen Elizabeth at the age of thirty-nine years performed the ceremony on thirty-nine persons. James II. was the last English monarch who kept up the custom.

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